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Guidebook Contents

Part 1 of 3

- Lecture 1: What Was the Northern Renaissance?
- Lecture 2: The Burgundian Netherlands
- Lecture 3: Panel Painters from c. 1400–c. 1435
- Lecture 4: The Van Eycks and the *Ghent Altarpiece*
- Lecture 5: Jan van Eyck's Religious Paintings
- Lecture 6: Jan van Eyck's Portraits
- Lecture 7: Rogier—Religious Paintings
- Lecture 8: Rogier—Devotional Paintings and Portraits
- Lecture 9: Petrus Christus—Heir to Van Eyck and Rogier
- Lecture 10: Hugo van der Goes
- Lecture 11: Dieric Bouts and Geertgen tot Sint Jans
- Lecture 12: Hans Memling

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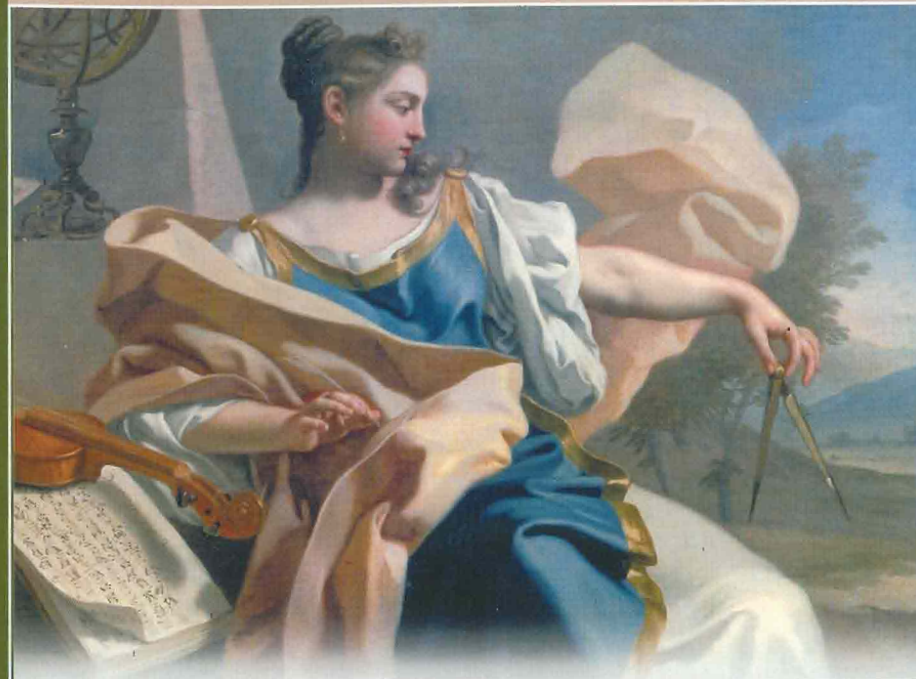
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The Art of the Northern Renaissance

Taught by: Professor Catherine B. Scallen
 Case Western Reserve University

Part 1

Course Guidebook



THE TEACHING COMPANY®

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Catherine B. Scallen is Associate Professor of Art History at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. She received her undergraduate degree in history from Wellesley College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, as a Wellesley Scholar (i.e., *magna cum laude*). She received her M.A. with honors from the Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art, in Williamstown, Massachusetts. In Williamstown, she co-curated the museum exhibition “Cubism and American Photography” for the Robert Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. Her Ph.D. in art history was awarded by Princeton University.

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Professor Scallen’s scholarship has centered on the art of the 17th-century Dutch artist Rembrandt van Rijn, the subject of many of her articles. Her book, *Rembrandt, Reputation, and the Practice of Connoisseurship*, was published in 2004. She has also served as a faculty study leader on trips to the Netherlands and Belgium for the Cleveland Museum of Art, Princeton University, and Case Western Reserve University and has provided audio commentary for “Flemish Paintings from the Hermitage Museum,” an exhibition of 17th-century Flemish art held at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto.

Table of Contents

The Art of the Northern Renaissance

Part I

Professor Biography	i
Course Scope	1
Lecture One What Was the Northern Renaissance?	3
Lecture Two The Burgundian Netherlands	9
Lecture Three Panel Painters from c. 1400–c. 1435	14
Lecture Four The Van Eycks and the <i>Ghent Altarpiece</i>	18
Lecture Five Jan van Eyck's Religious Paintings	22
Lecture Six Jan van Eyck's Portraits.....	27
Lecture Seven Rogier—Religious Paintings.....	31
Lecture Eight Rogier—Devotional Paintings and Portraits.....	35
Lecture Nine Petrus Christus—Heir to Van Eyck and Rogier.....	40
Lecture Ten Hugo van der Goes	45
Lecture Eleven Dieric Bouts and Geertgen tot Sint Jans	50
Lecture Twelve Hans Memling.....	55
Timeline	61
Glossary	66
Biographical Notes.....	Part II
Bibliography	Part III

The Art of the Northern Renaissance

Scope:

This course of 36 lectures is an introduction to the rich and varied art of the Northern Renaissance from about 1400 to about 1600. It surveys two types of art above all, oil painting and printmaking, in the regions that now comprise modern Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands, along with a brief look at Switzerland and England with the career of Hans Holbein the Younger.

The term *Northern Renaissance* has become standard when referring to much of northern European art in the 15th and 16th centuries and allows for pointed comparison with Italian Renaissance art. While Italian Renaissance art is better known today, both traditions were admired and imitated at the time. During the 15th century, some of the most important patrons of Northern Renaissance art were Italian themselves, and Italian artists were keenly aware of the innovations introduced by their northern counterparts. In the 16th century, it became more common for northern artists to travel in Italy, where they learned about the art of antiquity as well as that of the Renaissance.

Many kinds of artworks were made and treasured during this period: both large- and small-scale sculpture, precious metalwork, tapestries, and architecture. Yet the most consistently innovative work was executed in paint or in print. Fortunately, these media also claim the highest survival rate of artworks from the Northern Renaissance. Thus, the concentration on these media (with an occasional look at drawings, primarily as tools used in the process of painting) makes sense in an introductory survey.

The impact of political, religious, economic, and cultural changes on the art of the epoch is one essential focus of the course. The period from 1400 to 1600, the transition from the medieval world to the early modern era, was a highly eventful one throughout Europe. The consolidation of power by central states, the rise of the Protestant Reformation, increased international trade, the emergence of the middle classes, and the growing cultural interest in themes from the secular world and from classical antiquity—all these developments had powerful effects on the world of the artist, what he (almost always still a he) painted or executed in print, and often even how (in what style) he made it. For instance, the very invention and dissemination of printmaking in Europe during this era is related to the growth of disposable income and increased literacy across social classes.

The course topics are presented largely in a chronological and geographical format, following the careers of individual artists. The first 12 lectures cover 15th-century art in the Low Countries (modern Belgium and the Netherlands). The next 12 consider painting and prints made in what is now modern Germany, with a glance at a few artists active in Alsace (now in France), Switzerland, and England. For the last 12 lectures, we return to the Low Countries to study 16th-

century art. Such a schema allows us to understand the impact of innovations pioneered by certain artists on those who followed them, as well as the impact of societal changes on the art world. The emphasis in the discussion of each artist is multiple: The development of artistic style is traced, but the meaning of the subject and the function of each work are also considered. This allows us to properly relate the history of the art as understood in a more comprehensive sense than just the history of style.

We will examine a small group of artists through more than one lecture: Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden, Albrecht Dürer, Hans Holbein, Hieronymus Bosch, and Pieter Bruegel. These artists are singled out because each was singularly influential for his development of style and interpretation and choice of subjects. Unsurprisingly, each of them also seems to have been more than usually aware of his importance. Such a sense of self was a stark change from medieval society, where outside of the classes of the nobility and the clergy, the individual was of little moment. The changing status and self-consciousness of the artist as a figure worthy of respect and admiration is emphasized throughout the course.

We will also pay significant attention to the role of the patron, the person (or group) who either commissioned a work of art or bought one ready-made. Expansion of patronage beyond the realm of the highest nobility and the Christian Church is one of the cardinal developments of the era and would greatly affect how artists worked and what subjects they depicted.

We will also explore how paintings and prints were made, looking at such issues as who worked in a painter's workshop and what they did, how prints were designed and executed, and where these works of art were bought and sold. The beginnings of the open art market can be traced to the 16th century in northern Europe specifically, and its development is one of the signal accomplishments of the Northern Renaissance.

Finally, we will examine the changing nature of European society in this era, so long dominated by religion, for its influence on art. Even before the Protestant Reformation, aspects of spiritual devotion were shifting to an increased attention to private, individualized prayer. New kinds of artworks served the needs of this new form of devotion. But with the Protestant Reformation itself, the function of art in society would be questioned, particularly the purpose of religious art. Spurred on by this movement and by a widespread interest in aspects of culture other than religion, many secular subjects arise or expand in this period, such as portraits, landscapes, mythological tales, and moralizing scenes of daily life. The role of art in society changed from primarily serving religious needs and, secondarily, the political requirements of rulers to that of a multivalent medium, providing decoration, entertainment, instruction, preservation of personal memory, and status.

Lecture One

What Was the Northern Renaissance?

Scope: The term *Renaissance*, French for “rebirth,” was first used by 19th-century art historians to describe the art of Italy in the 15th and 16th centuries. *Renaissance* primarily refers to the influence of Greek and Roman antiquity on Italian art and culture at the end of the medieval period. Northern European artists did not draw on classical antiquity until the 16th century. They were initially interested in the natural world and in the role of individuals in society as both makers and patrons of artworks.

All the artworks in this course come from regions in modern-day Belgium, the Netherlands, northern France, Switzerland, and Germany, and a few from England. We will focus especially on painting and printmaking—the latter invented in 15th-century northern Europe. We will look at the dominant kinds of pictures made from 1400 to 1600, starting with religious works, then moving to portraiture and secular subjects, considering their functions and possible audiences. We will also discuss the impact of changes in Christian religious sensibilities on the visual arts, as well as changes in the patronage of art.

Outline

- I. This course examines works of Northern Renaissance art, those made from about 1400 to 1600 in a region that includes modern-day Belgium, the Netherlands, northern France, Germany, and Switzerland, plus a small look at England.
 - A. Many people associate the term *Renaissance*—French for “rebirth”—with Italy because it was first used by 19th-century art historians to describe the art of 15th- and 16th-century Italy.
 - B. Renaissance style was based on the study of classical art, particularly Roman art still in Italy.
 - C. The style was based, too, on the concept of idealized naturalism as the noblest type of art. Artists improved upon how people, objects, and nature really looked.
 - D. The Renaissance was also characterized by larger changes in society, chiefly the move from a God-centered, communal view of life to one that was human centered and individualized. This change accompanied growth in international trade and urbanism and new modes of communication.
 1. This change did not mean that society became areligious.
 2. Christianity was still dominant throughout this period.

- E. All these changes happened in northern Europe just as they did in Italy; thus, the term *Renaissance* can be applied to both places.
- II. Until about 1500, artists in northern Europe weren't overly interested in the art of classical antiquity, partly because there wasn't much of it available to them.
- A. Northern European artists shared with their Italian counterparts, however, an interest in reproducing the appearance of the natural world. Artists from both regions also emphasized the individual's role in society, as evidenced by the rise of portraiture and private devotional art.
 - B. This emphasis on the individual led to changing attitudes toward artists and their role in society.
- III. The Northern Renaissance featured many kinds of artistic media: architecture, metalwork, tapestry weaving, manuscript illumination, painting, and printmaking. We will concentrate on painting and printmaking, the most consistently innovative of these arts. We can look at two works to help reveal this innovation in painting in the 15th century.
- A. The patron of Jan van Eyck's *Virgin and Child with Saints Donatian and George and Canon Georg van der Paele* of 1436 was a layman employed by the Christian Church. The work is a stunning example of the naturalism of early Netherlandish painting.
 - B. A prototype of this painting was the basis of Gerard Loyer's *Reliquary of Charles the Bold* of 1467, a work in metal; here we have a painting serving as an artistic trendsetter.
- IV. The art of the Northern Renaissance began in the royal courts but quickly moved into important cities of the time.
- A. Bruges today is a charming small town in Belgium. The Bruges town hall, built by unknown regional architects from 1376–1402, is just one example of its glories. In the 15th century, though, it was the Manhattan of northern Europe, a major center of trade, banking, and government and home to diplomats and international merchants who were important art patrons.
 - B. Northern Europe was densely populated during this period. This urbanization helped disseminate new ideas in art and provided a strong economic base for art patronage.
 - C. If the 15th century was Bruges's period of glory, the 16th century was Antwerp's. The headquarters of the Butcher's Guild, designed by the architect Herman de Waghemaker, was built from 1501 to 1504. The scale of this building dwarfs the earlier Bruges town hall.
 - D. It should be pointed out that national boundaries today are not at all the same as they were during the Northern Renaissance, and even then,

they shifted frequently. For instance, "Germany" in the 15th and 16th centuries consisted of about 300 small states ruled by dukes, electors, and prince-bishops allied with the Holy Roman Emperor.

- V. The single most important category we will consider in this course is religious art. After the Protestant Reformation, we will distinguish between Roman Catholic and Protestant Christian art.
 - A. The art features many narratives from the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible. We will use the term *Old Testament* rather than *Hebrew Bible* in this course.
 - B. For example, Albrecht Dürer's engraving of *Adam and Eve* from 1504, while part of a cultural heritage shared with Judaism, must be understood through a Christian interpretation.
 - C. We will consider the function of religious works, not just their narratives and styles.
 - 1. Hugo van der Goes's *Portinari Altarpiece* from the mid-1470s is a particular kind of religious painting, an altarpiece placed in a church behind or above the altar whose function was to keep the laity's attention on the ritual taking place at the church altar.
 - 2. We will also consider other functions beyond religion. In this instance, we will examine why Tommaso Portinari, an Italian banker, commissioned an altarpiece from a Netherlandish artist and why the chapel in Florence in which it was placed was important to the Portinari family.
 - 3. The *Altarpiece of the Saints of Cologne* from the 1440s served the same function as the *Portinari Altarpiece*, but its appearance is different because of different regional styles.
 - a. Van der Goes created a naturalistic setting for his figures, but Stefan Lochner, to whom this painting is attributed, provided an abstract space for his figures: saints, the Virgin and Christ Child, and the Magi, all taken from different eras of Christianity.
 - b. Even when figures became more naturalistic, artists and patrons in Germany preferred a somewhat abstract background.
 - 4. Joachim Patinir's *The Penitence of Saint Jerome Triptych* from about 1518 suggests how altarpieces could change over time. Its triptych form and scenes were traditional, but the depiction of landscape was given a new prominence.
 - D. Private devotional works became more common during the Northern Renaissance, reflecting changes in religious attitudes that stressed personal devotion.
 - 1. Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* from the early 16th century was probably a private work. Its scenes of the Garden

of Eden and hell were relatively common, but the central section of this triptych is unlike anything seen before. The meaning of this section and of the work as a whole has been lost to modern scholars.

2. Another private devotional work by Hans Memling, the *Diptych of Maarten van Nieuwenhove* of 1487, shows a portrait of the patron praying on one side and the Virgin Mary and her infant son on the other. Although the portrait signals the rise of secular art, it still shows Van Nieuwenhove in a religious context. Not only is this diptych small enough to be portable, but it could be brought into domestic spaces to show the patron's piety and affluence.

VI. Portraits were not just found in religious contexts.

- A. A rare drawing, *Portrait of a Young Man*, has been attributed to Dieric Bouts from about 1460. A preparatory drawing like this would have been made for each client to limit the tedium of sitting for the artist. Such preparatory drawings, originally considered working tools to be used and thrown away, are extremely rare today.
- B. Hans Holbein's portrait drawing *Henry VII and Henry VIII* from 1537 provides invaluable information about an important portrait that no longer exists.
 1. Henry VIII commissioned Holbein, a German artist working for the court in London, to paint him, his wife, and his parents.
 2. This painting, intended to support the glory of the Tudor line, was destroyed in a fire in the 17th century. We do have the preparatory *cartoon*, the full-scale compositional drawing that would have been used to transfer the original design.

VII. As mentioned earlier, interest grew in landscapes as subject matter.

- A. Albrecht Altdorfer's *Saint George and the Dragon* from 1510 is a history painting but also a representation of landscape itself. This is a very different concept of what art was meant for. Here, the piece seems to be a stimulus for thought, emotion, and pleasurable viewing rather than devotion.
- B. This change in the function of paintings grew stronger in the 16th century. Pieter Bruegel's *Netherlandish Proverbs* of 1559 is a fascinating and humorous example.
 1. Bruegel depicts 85 to 100 Flemish proverbs in the work. For instance, the woman placing a blue cloak over a man's head shows that she has cuckolded him.
 2. The moralizing function of religious art had shifted to some degree to secular art, partly through the influence of the Protestant Reformation. A painting such as this was clearly meant for a private, domestic context and could serve as a conversation piece.

VIII. One of the most significant developments of the Northern Renaissance was the invention of printmaking in the 15th century. Techniques used to make designs on textiles and metal objects were employed to create images on wooden blocks or metal plates, which were transferred to paper.

- A. Martin Schongauer's *Temptation of Saint Anthony* from the 1470s is a good example of early prints. It's a religious image, but some of its appeal lies in the imaginative rendering of the demons tormenting this poor, elderly saint. This print had wide distribution, and Michelangelo copied it as a young artist.
- B. Dürer's *Adam and Eve* shows how the artist applied his study of human proportions to create ideal nudes, a new interest in northern Europe. This widely disseminated print helped other artists explore the idea of the nude.

IX. The period from 1400 to 1600 saw an enormous change in the patronage of art. Before 1400, patronage was limited to a few groups, such as royalty, nobility, church administrators, civic administrators, and guild officials. After 1400, merchants, civil servants, foreign bankers, and others entered the realm of art patronage. Less expensive prints and a growing middle class aided this expansion.

- A. Of the works shown in this lecture, only two—Holbein's drawing of Henry VIII and Loyet's reliquary for Charles the Bold—were commissioned at the highest level of society. The rest had other kinds of patrons.
- B. This was one of the most fascinating changes in a period of transformation in culture and art.

Works Discussed:

Note: The format and content of the entries in the **Works Discussed** list and on screen may vary somewhat depending upon the requirements of the organization that supplied the image.

Jan van Eyck: *Virgin and Child with Saints Donatian and George and Canon Georg van der Paele*, 1436, oil on panel, 4' x 5'1¾", Groeningemuseum, Bruges.

Gerard Loyet: *Reliquary of Charles the Bold*, c. 1467, gold and enamel, H: 2'9½", Cathedral of St. Paul, Liège.

Albrecht Dürer: *Adam and Eve*, c. 1504, engraving, 10 x 7¾", Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Hugo van der Goes: *Portinari Altarpiece* (open), 1476, oil on panel, 8'3½" x 19'2¾", Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Stefan Lochner: *Altarpiece of the Saints of Cologne (The Dombild Altarpiece)*, 1440s, mixed technique on wood and panel; central: 8'6½" x 6'1"; each wing: 8'6¾" x 4'8", Cologne Cathedral, Cologne.

Joachim Patinir: *The Penitence of Saint Jerome Triptych*, c. 1518, oil on panel, shaped top: central panel, overall, with engaged frame, 3'10¼" x 2'8"; each wing, overall, with engaged frame, 3'11½" x 1'2", The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Hieronymus Bosch: *Garden of Earthly Delights*, left wing: *Paradise (Garden of Eden)*, central panel: *Garden of Earthly Delights*, right wing: *Hell (Inferno)*, c. 1503–04, oil on panel, central panel: 7'2½" x 6'4¾", wings: 7'2½" x 3'2¼", Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Hans Memling: *Diptych of Maarten van Nieuwenhove*, 1487, oil on oak panel, each wing: 1'8½" x 1'4¼", Memlingmuseum, Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges.

Dieric Bouts: *Portrait of a Young Man*, late 1460–70, silverpoint on ivory-toned prepared paper, 8¼ x 6 11/16", Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts, SC 1939:3.

Hans Holbein the Younger: *Henry VII and Henry VIII*, 1536–37, ink and watercolor, 8'5 ½" x 4'7", National Portrait Gallery, London.

Albrecht Altdorfer: *Saint George and the Dragon*, c. 1510, oil on parchment mounted on panel, 11 x 9", Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

Pieter Bruegel: *Netherlandish Proverbs*, 1559, oil on panel, 3'10" x 5'4", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin.

Martin Schongauer: *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1470s, engraving, 1"¼" x 9", Fondazione Magnani Rocca, Corte di Mamiano, Italy.

Essential Reading:

Harbison, *Mirror of the Artist: Northern Renaissance Art in Its Historical Context*.

Smith, *The Northern Renaissance*.

Supplementary Reading:

Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What associations does the term *Northern Renaissance* first bring to mind?
2. Why is it useful to use the term *Renaissance* instead of referring to the span of years from 1400 to 1600?

Lecture Two The Burgundian Netherlands

Scope: From the late 14th century through the 15th century, the dukes of Burgundy were among the wealthiest and most influential rulers of their day. Amassing territory in what is now modern France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, they controlled one of the richest and most industrialized regions of Western Europe. Several of them were also important art patrons. In this lecture, we will look at some of the artworks made for the first Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Bold, concentrating on his patronage at the Chartreuse de Champmol, a monastic community he supported and where he chose to be buried. The ducal chapel was decorated by innovative sculpture made by Jean Marville, Claus Sluter, and Claus de Werve, which would provide inspiration for painters of the next generation in its emphasis on naturalistic and individualized figures that exhibited a range of emotions. Another influential art form was that of manuscript illumination, also patronized by leading figures of the day, such as Jean, the Duke of Berry, brother to Philip the Bold. Illuminators, such as the Limbourg brothers, in the employ of Jean of Berry, worked in the International Gothic style, a late-medieval courtly style found throughout Europe that emphasized elegance, graceful movement, and linear beauty in figures that often defied natural proportions. Yet the settings for these figures were beginning to display naturalistic details and a suggestion of real space. Such manuscript paintings would also help point the way to panel painters of the early 15th century.

Outline

- I. John II the Good, king of France since 1350, appointed his youngest son, Philip, as the Duke of Burgundy in 1363, beginning the Valois dynasty of Burgundian dukes.
 - A. In 1356, during the Hundred Years' War, Philip fought alongside his father at the Battle of Poitiers and was taken captive by the English; both were held prisoner until 1361. Philip's bravery in battle at such a young age earned him the nickname "the Bold."
 - B. In 1369, Philip married Margaret de Male, daughter of Louis, count of Flanders. She was heiress to her father's lands in five earldoms, located in what is now northern France and Belgium. The earldom of Flanders included the cities of Bruges and Ghent.
 - C. Philip, through his marriage to Margaret, would rule the combined principalities of Burgundy and Flanders for 20 years. This would be a period of economic expansion for his territories and his own revenues.

- II. As ruler of a large and wealthy region, Philip needed to project a powerful public image, achieved in part through patronage of the arts. Architectural and sculpted monuments, as well as paintings, offered permanent displays of Philip's status.
- A. Philip founded a Carthusian monastery at Dijon, in the heart of his original Burgundian lands. The monastery, the Chartreuse de Champmol (or "charterhouse" of Champmol), contained a ducal chapel, site of the duke's tomb and intended as a dynastic burial place.
 - B. Plans for building the Chartreuse de Champmol date from 1377, when the land for it was purchased. Construction began in 1385; the monastery was completed in 1388. Work on the chapel continued through the end of the 14th century, until the tomb was finished in 1410.
 - C. The most prominent and innovative feature at the Chartreuse de Champmol was its sculptural decoration, carried out under Jean de Marville from 1384 to 1389, then under his successor, Claus Sluter, from 1389 until his death in 1406. He was succeeded by his nephew Claus de Werve.
 - D. The portal to the chapel, first designed by Jean de Marville but changed and largely executed under the direction of Claus Sluter, shows the duke and duchess of Burgundy kneeling in prayer
 - 1. After Marville's death and a site visit by Philip the Bold, Sluter changed the portal's design to include the patron saints of the ducal couple. The statues seen today were all carved by Sluter and his workshop.
 - 2. Philip the Good is shown with Saint John the Baptist, patron saint of both Burgundy and France. Margaret de Male is shown with Saint Catherine.
 - 3. The most remarkable aspects of the portal sculpture are the sense of naturalism of the figures and their projection in space. Both the duke and duchess are recognizable from other portraits. This sense of naturalism in proportion and pose, as well as the individual characterization of the ducal couple, mark a turning point in art of this region.
 - 4. The Virgin Mary and Christ Child, found on the *trumeau* (the central division of the portal), activate the space through their poses, size, and boldly carved garments.
 - E. The *Well of Moses*, which was a hexagonal fountain in the cloister's yard, also served as a cemetery cross. Designed by Sluter, it was begun in 1395 and finished in 1404. Destroyed as a whole over time, only fragments of the upper section, a Calvary group, remain, but its composition is known from copies. The lower section survives largely intact, where six life-sized prophets and six angels were carved.

- 1. Note that the figures would have been polychromed, that is, painted with different colors; some of the original paint remains visible.
 - 2. The emphasis is on the individualized experience of the prophets and angels as they meditate on Christ's sacrifice, and both bodies and expressions convince us of their reality of form and feeling.
- F. The ducal tomb, begun under Jean de Marville in 1381, continued by Claus Sluter, and finished by Claus de Werve, the nephew of Sluter, in 1410, has also suffered over time, particularly during the French Revolution, when the figure of Philip the Bold was destroyed.
- 1. A reproduction of this figure now lies down; his funeral mourners, including ducal officials, family members, and Carthusian monks, are seen through an arcaded structure below.
 - 2. These alabaster figures are striking in their poses and expressions of grief; although not specific portraits, they represent the figures who would have marched in the duke's funeral reception.
 - 3. De Werve carved the figure of the duke, the angels, and most of the mourners, working in Sluter's style.
- G. The most important aspect of the sculpture at Chartreuse de Champmol is its promotion of the naturalistic style. The figures have real weight, their clothing seems to move, and they experience life individually and uniquely.

III. A second important art medium of the time was *illuminated manuscripts*, precious hand-written and -decorated books. The Valois kings and dukes, particularly Jean, Duke of Berry and brother of the Duke of Burgundy, were significant patrons of illuminated manuscripts.

- A. A *book of hours* was a kind of manuscript used by a layperson to organize prayers at specific times of day and through the liturgical calendar. The books were luxury objects, meant to be handheld, and often beautifully decorated throughout.
 - 1. Perhaps the most such famous manuscript, commissioned by Jean of Berry, was his *Très Riches Heures* (*Very Rich Hours*), painted by the Limbourg brothers, Pol, Herman, and Jean, and left unfinished at their deaths in 1416. Like Sluter, they came from the northern Netherlands and first worked for Philip the Bold, but on his death, they moved to the service of his brother.
 - 2. Berry's *Très Riches Heures* is most famous for the calendar decorations that precede the texts for each month of the year. Depictions of the nobility alternate with peasant scenes set at the many residences of Jean and his noble brothers.
 - 3. The January page reveals the duke and his courtiers at a New Year's banquet; the February page shows peasants in a humble

dwelling, warming themselves while sheep huddle outdoors. The April page presents an engagement party of the nobility.

4. Each of the calendar scenes is full of color and details of daily life among different social classes. There is an interest in suggesting a convincing fall of light and recession into space.
5. The elegant courtiers, with their elongated figures and exaggerated poses, represent the *International Gothic* style, also characterized by bright colors and, often, applied gold. This style emphasized a sophisticated combination of naturalism of setting and details with stylized, almost weightless figures. The term *International* was used because it was promoted at courts and in urban centers throughout western and central Europe; *Gothic* was used because it arose in the late medieval Gothic period during the 14th and 15th centuries.

B. Other contemporary manuscripts also illustrate this influential style.

1. The *maréchal* (marshal) of Boucicaut, an important French military leader, commissioned a book of hours about 1408–1410 from an anonymous artist now called the Boucicaut Master.
2. In the page showing the Visitation, the meeting of the Virgin Mary and her cousin Elizabeth, both pregnant, we see the same interest in combining elegant yet nonnaturalistic figures with convincing details of a beautiful setting in the countryside.
3. A second illumination by the Boucicaut Master or his workshop from about 1412 is from Pierre Salmon's political treatise, *Les Demandes Faites par le Roi Charles VI* (*The Questions Asked by King Charles VI*). On this page, we see the author kneeling before the king, seated on a bed covered with the fleur-de-lis. Behind these two are three figures: Jean, Duke of Berry, at the center; possibly Louis, Duke of Orléans, at right; and at left, John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy, son and successor to Philip the Bold.

IV. The growing interest around the year 1400 in naturalistic figures, settings, and even emotions—seen in the sculptures and manuscripts from French ducal circles, and, in several cases, the work of Netherlandish artists working in France—formed the basis of a new style of panel painting that would quickly become dominant in the northern territories of the dukes of Burgundy, especially Flanders.

Works Discussed:

Anonymous French Artist: *Portrait de Philippe le Hardi* (*Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy*), 17th century copy of early 15th century original, oil on wood (panel), 1'4 ½" x 11", Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, Inv.3977.

Jean de Marville and Claus Sluter: *Portal to the Church of the Chartreuse de Champmol*, 1385–93, stone, Chartreuse de Champmol, Dijon.

Claus Sluter: *Well of Moses*, Chartreuse de Champmol, 1395–1404, stone, H: 6', Chartreuse de Champmol, Dijon.

Jean de Marville, Claus Sluter, and Claus de Werve: *Tomb of Philip the Bold*, 1381–1410, alabaster, H: 7'11½", Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon.

The Limbourg Brothers: *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry, January Page*, c. 1416, illumination on vellum, 11½ x 8¼", Musée Condé, Chantilly, France.

Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry, February Page, c. 1416, illumination on vellum, 11½ x 8¼", Musée Condé, Chantilly, France.

Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry, April Page, c. 1416, illumination on vellum, 11½ x 8¼", Musée Condé, Chantilly, France.

The Boucicaut Master: *Boucicaut Hours, Visitation*, c. 1408–10, watercolor and gold leaf on vellum, 7 x 5", Musée Jacquemart-Andre, Paris.

Pierre Salmon in Conversation with King Charles VI in Les Demandes Faites par le Roi Charles VI, c. 1412, book illumination, 11 x 8", Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Geneva.

Essential Reading:

Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*.

Supplementary Reading:

Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance*.

Calmette, *The Golden Age of Burgundy*.

Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon and Cleveland Museum of Art, *Art from the Court of Burgundy, 1364–1419*.

Prevenier and Blockmans, *The Burgundian Netherlands*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What role did the Chartreuse de Champmol play in presenting Philip the Bold's Burgundian rule?
2. What combination of naturalistic and nonnaturalistic elements makes up the International Gothic style?

Lecture Three

Panel Painters from c. 1400–c. 1435

Scope: Panel paintings by two early-15th-century painters in the employ of Philip the Bold of Burgundy serve as transitional works, displaying a combination of International Gothic style and a new interest in naturalism. Melchior Broederlam painted wings for the sculpted altarpiece by Jacques de Baerze. Jean Malouel painted the *Pietà* (a lamentation over the dead body of Christ), with the coat of arms of Burgundy on its reverse.

One of the first painters to draw fully on the innovations found in sculpture, manuscript illumination, and panel painting was Robert Campin, once called the Master of Flémalle after several paintings formerly in the abbey of the town of Flémalle, Belgium, were attributed to him. Active in the town of Tournai from about 1400 to 1440, Campin developed a narrative style in which fully modeled, weighty figures set in convincing spaces reacted strongly to events of sacred history. He was among the first painters to execute portraits of well-to-do but non-noble citizens, in a way that emphasized their individuality.

Outline

I. In this lecture, we look at panel painting and the ways in which that art form was affected by the changes that had been introduced in sculpture and manuscript illumination.

A. Melchior Broederlam (c. 1355–c. 1411), Philip the Bold's official painter in Flanders, painted the wings (exterior shutters) for a carved altarpiece of Christ's Crucifixion by another Flemish artist, Jacques de Baerze (active c. 1384–1399). The altarpiece was installed in the church at the Chartreuse de Champmol in 1399.

1. The painted wings show scenes from Christ's childhood: the Annunciation and the Visitation on the left wing and the Presentation in the Temple and the Flight into Egypt on the right.
2. The Annunciation, in which the archangel Gabriel tells the Virgin Mary that she will bear the Savior, is shown as an interior scene, with the front wall cut away for us to see the figures. The Visitation, in which the pregnant Mary visits her pregnant cousin Elizabeth, is shown in a rocky landscape. In both cases, the artist was interested in conveying a sense of recession into space.
3. The right wing echoes the left: The Presentation in the Temple, in which Simeon holds the infant Christ for circumcision, is another interior scene, while the Flight into Egypt, showing the holy

family's escape from Herod's decree that infant sons shall be killed, is outdoors.

4. The use of gold and expensive pigments, such as the ultramarine blue of Mary's robe, indicates the importance of this altarpiece.

B. Jean Malouel (c. 1365–1415) was a painter and minor court official from 1397 until 1415. He was the uncle of the Limbourg brothers, for whom Philip was also a patron. In addition to making independent paintings, Malouel painted figures on the *Well of Moses* and on Philip's tomb.

1. Malouel's *Large Pietà*, created from about 1400–1404, is a *tondo* (round painting), a format more common in Italy than in northern Europe. Philip's ducal arms are painted on the back.
2. The *Large Pietà* is unusual for combining the iconography of the Trinity—God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit—with the lamentation of the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Evangelist.
3. Its style is characteristic of International Gothic in its elegant, graceful curves and the naturalistic three-dimensional solidity of the body of Christ.

II. Robert Campin (c. 1375/79–1444) was known as the Master of Flémalle.

A. Evidence places Campin from at least 1406 in the town of Tournai, soon to be absorbed into the duchy of Burgundy, where he worked for the town government, local churches, and private individuals. He painted panels and polychromed statues.

B. Campin was a member of the guild of goldsmiths and painters in Tournai and ran an active workshop, with at least four apprentices. He also owned real estate and invested in other projects in Tournai.

C. Connected to an unsuccessful citizens' revolt against the patrician government in Tournai, Campin was punished in 1429 for his refusal to testify against one rebel. He was sentenced to a year's exile from Tournai in 1432 because, though married, he was living with another woman. Margaret of Burgundy intervened so that his punishment was converted to a fine. She may also have been his patron.

D. There are no securely documented existing works by Campin. However, art historians have attributed a group of paintings by the Master of Flémalle to this artist. The name of the master came from a set of paintings said to have come from an abbey in Flémalle. However, no abbey was ever located in that town.

1. The *Triptych of the Entombment*, from about 1410–20, is an important transitional work. On the left, the unknown donor kneels beneath a background scene of the good and bad thieves of Calvary. In the center is the scene of Christ's entombment, surrounded by participants and angels. On the right, Christ appears

at his Resurrection. "Old-fashioned" elements include the decorated gold background and the placement of figures and objects higher up on the panels to indicate recession. But the figures and drapery are weighty and monumental, with Sluter-like emotions.

2. Campin's *Nativity*, from about 1425, suggests further advances in naturalism in the generation since Broederlam and Malouel. Instead of a gold background, an extensive landscape recedes smoothly into the distance. The figures of Mary and Joseph seem descended from Sluter's sculpture in their solid drapery folds and more convincing proportions.
3. The three-paneled *Merode Triptych*, called *The Annunciation Triptych*, is also from the Campin workshop. The name acknowledges a former owner, the countess of Merode of Brussels. In the central panel is the Annunciation; at left, the donors are peering through an open door but outside of the space of the Annunciation scene, set in a domestic interior; at right is Joseph in his carpenter's shop.
 - a. The Incarnation of Christ is represented by a tiny figure with a crucifix descending on a light beam. Campin used many ordinary objects for symbolic meaning; for example, the lilies on the table symbolize the Virgin Mary.
 - b. In the 1930s, German art historian Erwin Panofsky referred to the carrying of religious meaning by ordinary objects as *disguised symbolism*. It is disguised, however, mainly from us; patrons and most contemporaries of Campin would understand the dual meanings intended. In this way, the new naturalism could still be infused with symbolic content.
4. Campin's *Virgin and Child*, assigned to the mid-1430s, continues the emphasis on monumental form through strong lighting and thick drapery folds. A cloth of honor, a symbol of royalty and divinity, is placed behind the figures.
5. Portraits of a couple have also been attributed to Campin. Their costumes and idealized faces suggest they were non-noble and indicate the role of patrons beyond the official spheres of church, state, and nobility. The palpable sense of three dimensions must have amazed contemporaries, who were accustomed to a flatter, more ornamental approach to depicting human forms.

III. Campin's panel painting, the dominant medium of the time, paired traditional subjects with new ideas and models from sculpture and manuscript painting. His expanded use of oil paint allowed for a greater depth of color and a sense of three dimensions, innovations built on by the even more famous Van Eyck brothers.

- A. Panel painting involved applying a preparatory layer (*ground*) to the panel, adding the underdrawing, and working up the design in oil.
- B. Applying multiple layers of transparent paint, a technique called *glazing*, added depth and richness to the painting.

Works Discussed:

Jacques de Baerze: *Altarpiece of the Crucifixion*, 1390–94, gilded wood, 5'2½" x 8'3¼", Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon.

Melchior Broederlam: *Altarpiece of the Crucifixion* (wings), 1394–99, oil on panel, 5'5¾" x 4'1¼" (each wing), Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon.

Jean Malouel (attributed to): *Large Pietà*, c. 1400–04, oil on panel (tondo), diameter: 2'1¼", Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Robert Campin: *Triptych of the Entombment*, c. 1410–20, oil on panel, center: 2'1½" x 1'9"; wings: 2'1½" x 10½", Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, London.

Nativity, c. 1425, oil on panel, 2'10¼" x 2'3½", Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon.

The Annunciation Triptych (The Merode Triptych), c. 1425, oil on panel, center panel: 2'1¼" x 2'1", left wing: 2'1½" x 10¾", right wing: 2'1½" x 11", The Cloisters Collection, 1956 (56.70), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Virgin and Child, c. 1430–34, mixed media on oak panel, 5'3" x 2'2 ¾", Frankfurt Am Main, Städtisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt.

Portrait of a Man; Portrait of a Woman, c. 1430, oil on panel, 1'4" x 11", National Gallery, London.

Essential Reading:

Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*, chapter 6.

Supplementary Reading:

Foister and Nash, eds., *Robert Campin: New Directions in Scholarship*.

Pächt, *Van Eyck and the Founders of Early Netherlandish Painting*.

Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*.

Thürlemann, *Robert Campin: A Monographic Study with Critical Catalogue*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why might the new naturalistic style achieved by oil paint have appealed to the wider circle of patrons found in the 15th century?
2. Should it matter if the *Merode Triptych* was actually painted by Campin or produced in his workshop by his assistants?

Lecture Four

The Van Eycks and the *Ghent Altarpiece*

Scope: In 1432, the *Ghent Altarpiece* was dedicated in the Church of St. John (now the Cathedral of St. Bavo) in Ghent, a prosperous Flemish town ruled by the Duke of Burgundy. The work was one of the most influential and complex of its time. This large altarpiece, commissioned by Jodocus Vyd and his wife, was begun by Hubert van Eyck and finished by his younger brother, Jan. The work of Hubert is now shrouded in mystery, including the extent of his participation in the planning and execution of the *Ghent Altarpiece*. The paintings by Jan would gain international fame.

In this lecture, we explore the patrons' reasons for commissioning the altarpiece and their role in a larger movement of expanded patronage among the administrative and merchant classes of the Burgundian territories. We also consider theories about the Van Eycks' respective roles in making the piece, and we examine its style and physical condition. We delve into the meaning and history of this complex work, and finally, we look briefly into the origins of altarpieces.

Outline

- I. The *Ghent Altarpiece*, a polyptych, was commissioned for the Church of St. John in Ghent. This large altarpiece was begun by Hubert van Eyck and finished by his younger brother, Jan, in 1432.
- II. Hubert van Eyck (c. 1385/90–1426) and Jan van Eyck (c. 1395–1441) were from the town of Maaseik, near what is now the Dutch-Belgian border.
 - A. Hubert achieved fame first, but few of his works survive. He moved to Ghent in about 1420, where his primary commission was for the *Ghent Altarpiece*, whose lost frame stated, “no greater [painter] was found.”
 - B. Jan is documented as the court painter to John of Bavaria, Count of Holland, from 1422 to about 1425. He then became court painter and *valet de chambre* to Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy. He traveled for Philip on several occasions, finally settling in Bruges in 1431.
- III. The patrons of the *Ghent Altarpiece*, Jodocus Vyd and his wife, Elisabeth Borluut, were from prominent Ghent families.
 - A. Vyd paid for the restoration of a chapel in the parish church of St. John around 1410–20. The commission for a new altarpiece probably dates from the inauguration of the restored chapel or shortly afterward.
 - B. Such an enterprise marked the expansion of patronage. In earlier centuries, individuals other than churchmen or noblemen rarely assigned such major commissions.
 - C. The altarpiece was paid for through a foundation set up by Vyd and Borluut.
- IV. The two-tiered altarpiece consists of 24 panels arranged as a triptych, with movable wings on each side. The whole measures 11.5 feet by 15 feet.
 - A. In its customary position, with the wings closed, the altarpiece's bottom tier shows the patrons praying and Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist (patrons of the church and the chapel, respectively) depicted in *grisaille*, a style of painting that imitates stone statuary.
 - B. On the exterior upper tier, we see the Annunciation and, in *lunettes* (half-round panels), prophets and sibyls who foretold the coming of the Savior.
 - C. On Sundays, the upper-tier wings would be opened to reveal images of the Virgin Mary, Saint John the Baptist, and God. Music-making angels flank God, and at the far left and right stand Adam and Eve.
 - D. On important liturgical feast days, the lower wings would open to reveal saints and angels coming to adore the Lamb of God (Christ).
 - E. The theme of the altarpiece visually embodies the endowment's purpose and refers to the salvation of humankind, necessitated by the fall of Adam and Eve and carried out through the sacrifice of Jesus.
- V. After Hubert van Eyck died in 1426, Jan finished the altarpiece at Vyd's request. The altarpiece was dedicated in 1432. How much of what we see was the work of Hubert, and how much was the work of Jan?
 - A. X-radiography, which reveals different densities of pigments, and infrared reflectography, which reveals underlayers of paint and preparatory drawings, have been important tools for understanding the working processes of early Netherlandish painters.
 - B. Using these technologies, scholars have speculated that the underdrawing for the entire altarpiece, except for the figures of Adam and Eve, was completed by Hubert. Scholars differ, however, on how much of the visible paint layer he completed before his death.
 1. The room with a flat-beamed ceiling in which the Annunciation takes place was originally designed as a series of stone niches. Many think that Jan made this change from the underdrawing.
 2. The background trees and bushes in the scenes of hermits and pilgrims were also changed to include Mediterranean plants, supporting the theory that Jan traveled to Italy in 1425.

3. Jan probably had about two years to finish the altarpiece before its dedication, but the seamless appearance of the finished work makes it impossible to distinguish one brother's hand from the other.

VI. The complex symbolism of the *Ghent Altarpiece* includes both obvious symbols and disguised symbolism.

- A. In the Annunciation scene, Mary is dressed in virginal white, while Gabriel carries a lily, a symbol of Mary's purity. The dove of the Holy Spirit descends on Mary, indicating the Incarnation of Christ. The figures are too large for the room, suggesting a symbolic space, yet the decoration recalls real Flemish architecture.
- B. The central section of the interior upper tier presents nearly life-size figures of the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, and God. Mary, Jesus, and John the Baptist were often shown together in art, a combination called the *deësis* (from the Greek word for "supplication"), which implied the coming of the Last Judgment.
 1. God the Father is never shown in the *deësis*, but he is symbolized by a papal tiara and shown without wounds in his hands. The resurrected Christ is nearly always shown with such wounds from his crucifixion.
 2. The text on the throne, "This is the Almighty God through His Divine Majesty," seems to refer to God the Father. The cloth of honor in front of the throne, however, is decorated with grapes, a symbol of the Eucharistic wine, and pelicans, a symbol of Christ.
- C. The lower tier of the interior is one continuous scene across the width of the altarpiece. Various types of saints gather by rank to adore the Lamb, the symbol of Jesus, on the altar.

VII. Several aspects of the altarpiece stand out. It combines themes not normally brought together, and it combines various scales.

- A. The scale on the upper level changes in the scenes of Adam and Eve; the angels; and the figures of Mary, John the Baptist, and God. Each scene's perspective is consistent, but the perspective of one scene does not relate to that of the others. The difference in scale between the upper and lower scenes suggests an alternate reality of a sacred realm coexisting with an earthly realm.
- B. The use of oil paint creates a sense of transparency. In such glazing, layers of oil with small amounts of pigments were used.
- C. We see the convergence of a new artistic goal—convincing naturalism of depiction—with the use of the relatively new medium of oil paint. Both style and medium had a purpose: to convince viewers of the

reality of the religious truths represented and, thereby, to inspire awe, faith, and pious behavior.

- D. The Virgin Mary and John the Baptist hold books, emphasizing the word of God and indicating this part of Europe's high literacy rate.

VIII. The history of the *Ghent Altarpiece* tells us what this work meant to different generations.

- A. In the 15th century, it became a model for other painters. It was restored in the 16th century and further preserved in the 17th century.
- B. In the early 19th century, the altarpiece was taken away as one of the spoils of the Napoleonic conquest. Eventually, it was returned.
- C. In the late 19th century, the board of St. Bavo's sold several panels to the Berlin Museum to raise money for the church. They were returned after World War I. The panel stolen in 1934 has never resurfaced.

IX. Altarpieces developed as a result of a change in liturgy in the 13th century.

- A. Until that time, the priest faced the congregation. In the 13th century the Catholic Church had the priest turn his back on the congregants.
- B. The altarpiece was born of the need to focus the congregation's attention on the Mass and its meaning. The theme of the sacrificial lamb corresponds to the priest's consecration of the host and the wine.

Works Discussed:

Hubert and Jan van Eyck: *The Ghent Altarpiece*, completed 1432, oil on panel, each panel: 4'8½" x 1'8¼", wings open: 11'5¾" x 15'1½", wings closed: 11'5¾" x 7'3¾", Cathedral of St. Bavo, Ghent.

Essential Reading:

Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*, chapter 5.

Supplementary Reading:

Pächt, *Van Eyck and the Founders of Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapter 4.

Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapter 8.

Schmidt, *The Ghent Altarpiece*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Does it matter if we can distinguish Hubert van Eyck's contribution to the *Ghent Altarpiece* from his brother Jan's? Why or why not?
2. What effect would the fact that the *Ghent Altarpiece* was fully opened only several days of the year have had on 15th-century viewers?

Lecture Five

Jan van Eyck's Religious Paintings

Scope: Jan van Eyck was a court painter and *valet de chambre* to Philip the Good of Burgundy. None of his work for the duke survives, but we know that the duke admired him from a 1434 document granting a 720 percent raise to the painter. Van Eyck's panel paintings for such contemporaries as Burgundian chancellor Nicolas Rolin and church administrator Georg van der Paele make clear his importance as a religious artist in Northern Renaissance culture. His almost magical manipulation of oil paint, still relatively new at the time, gained him fame at home and abroad. His naturalistic style used everyday objects to convey sacred meanings through an elaborate system of symbolic content. Whether large or small, Van Eyck's religious works convey a sense of grandeur and spiritual certainty.

Outline

- I. Van Eyck traveled for Philip the Good during his early career as court painter (1425–41), but by 1431, he had settled in Bruges.
 - A. He bought a house, married, and had a son in 1434, named for Philip, who acted as the boy's godfather. In the same year, Philip requested a raise of 720 percent in Van Eyck's annual retaining fee, a signal of the special relationship between the painter and the duke. Sadly, none of Jan van Eyck's work for Philip the Good survives.
 - B. Van Eyck worked for other clients, too. He polychromed statues for the town hall of Bruges and received commissions from private patrons. Nicolas Rolin, the chancellor of the duchy of Burgundy from 1422 to 1457, was one of Van Eyck's most important patrons.
- II. Van Eyck painted *Virgin and Child with Chancellor Nicolas Rolin* during the 1430s, likely for Rolin's parish church of Notre-Dame-du-Chastel in Autun in Burgundy. The subject is *Marian Devotion*: the honor due the Virgin Mary as the mother of Jesus and intercessor for humankind.
 - A. In the painting, Rolin kneels before the Virgin and Christ Child in a richly decorated, secular space.
 - B. The capitals at the corners of the room depict the fall of Adam and Eve, Cain slaying Abel, and the drunkenness of Noah, biblical sins understood as sins in all humans. Rolin kneels to receive absolution for his sins from the Christ Child, who raises his right hand in a gesture of forgiveness and blessing.
 - C. The river separating vineyards—Rolin owned valuable vineyards in Burgundy—from churches and other towers may suggest the

separation of the secular and sacred realms.

- D. In the painting, Rolin is a powerful, wealthy sinner who prepares to repent for his sins. But does the chancellor even see Christ and the Virgin Mary? His gaze is directed straight ahead, suggesting an internal vision of his piety.
 - E. A pious Rolin is depicted in splendid surroundings and clothing. A purse originally at his side was later painted over, perhaps because it overemphasized worldly success. At the time, piety and wealth were not necessarily contradictory.
 - F. Whether vision or "real" visitation, the painting convinces us of its reality through Van Eyck's extraordinary oil-painting technique.
- III. *Virgin and Child with Georg van der Paele* of 1436 was commissioned by a wealthy church administrator, Georg van der Paele. At 4 by 5 feet, it is Van Eyck's second largest painting after the *Ghent Altarpiece*.
 - A. Van der Paele was a lay member of the church's administration. After serving at the papal court in Rome, he grew wealthy by receiving benefices from churches in Europe. In 1425, he was named a secular canon of St. Donatian's in Bruges.
 - B. The Virgin Mary sits on a marble throne under a canopy of honor, with the Christ Child on her lap. They turn to look at Van der Paele, presented by his patron saint, George. Saint Donatian, a 4th-century bishop, stands on the left.
 - C. The painting's frame is original and was painted by Van Eyck with inscriptions, coats of arms, the names of the artist and patron, and a hymn to Mary. Van der Paele's founding of two chaplaincies in 1434 is also mentioned. These elements ensured that Masses would be said for Van der Paele and his family. Thus, the painting stands for both private devotion and corporate worship.
 - D. Scenes of Old and New Testament stories of sacrifice and victory support the active role of the church on Earth, symbolized as well by the saints.
 - E. Van der Paele does not actually see the Virgin and Christ Child but gazes into space and holds his spectacles. As with the previous work, the image suggests an internal vision of these holy figures that was a product of personal piety but supported by work for the church.
 - F. Van Eyck's technique and his fascination for details create a densely packed spiritual vision, supporting the idea that piety can make reality of internal experience. At the same time, it supports the propriety of the church's material riches as carriers of spiritual symbolism.
 - G. This much-admired painting was mirrored in a work of 1467, when Duke Charles the Bold commissioned Gerard Loyet to make a small-

scale sculpture of the scene.

IV. *The Virgin and Child in an Interior*, also made around 1436, excerpts the same main theme, devotion to the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child.

- A. The space seems much more convincing in its perspective than precedents, such as Campin's works, yet the figure of the Virgin, should she stand, would loom far too large. The room is a symbolic construct, not a one-to-one replication of any "real" space, and the woman and child are no ordinary mortals.
- B. Objects in the room carry symbolic meaning: the lions on the throne, reminiscent of the lions on the throne of King Solomon and suggestive of the Virgin's own wisdom; the fruits of paradise on the windowsill and in Christ's hand; and the glass container, through which light passes without effect—just as Christ came into the world through the pure body of the Virgin, conceived without the stain of Original Sin.
- C. The Council of Basel, meeting between 1435 and 1439, debated the concept of the Virgin's Immaculate Conception, eventually deciding in its favor.

V. *The Triptych with the Virgin and Child* of 1437 is another private devotional image of the Virgin Mary and Christ Child.

- A. The small piece shows the Virgin flanked on the wings by Saint Michael with a donor and Saint Catherine. The Annunciation is depicted on the exterior in grisaille.
- B. In the original frame, Van Eyck created the illusion of carved writing. The writing quotes verses from the Wisdom of Solomon and states Van Eyck's authorship of the piece. Van Eyck signed nine of his paintings, more than any other 15th-century Netherlandish painter.
- C. The Christ Child holds a scroll that instructs the viewer in Latin to follow the example of Christ's humility. This kind of personal relationship to God was a key element of Modern Devotion, a late-14th-century spiritual movement in the Low Countries and Germany that emphasized direct access to religious truth through individual prayer and meditation.
- D. Time-honored conventions, such as the coloring of the Virgin's garments, were expected in Van Eyck's work. His illusionistic presentation of these traditional motifs, which made their "reality effect" so strong, was innovative.

VI. Another small image is the *Virgin and Child in a Church*.

- A. The Virgin Mary stands, holding the Christ Child, in a Gothic cathedral. The incongruence of her height with the building is notable. Mary is not only in a church, but she stands for *Ecclesia* ("church," a feminine noun in Latin).

- B. The architectural space is so convincing in its Gothic forms that art historians have tried to identify it with a specific cathedral. But Van Eyck appears to have drawn elements from a number of real churches and transformed them into an ideal one.
- C. Given the normal east-west orientation of a Christian church, the light falling through the windows would have to fall from the north, a physical impossibility in this far northern hemisphere but perhaps a supernatural light. Some argue that some Netherlandish churches were enough "off axis" to have made such a fall of light possible in summer.
- D. Van Eyck may have been inspired by cult statues of the Virgin and icons found in Netherlandish churches. These formalized depictions of the Virgin and Christ Child from the Byzantine Empire were often believed to be miraculous images of the Virgin.
- E. Some copies of the work, such as the one by the so-called Master of 1499, show it as part of a diptych.

VII. In Van Eyck's *Saint Barbara*, dated 1437, the saint leafs through a prayer book on her lap, holding a palm, symbol of her martyrdom. Behind her rises a tower, her symbol.

- A. We are really not sure how to categorize this work. It was done in silverpoint on paper, which is a drawing technique, but it was mounted on wood afterward.
- B. Saint Barbara, who is no longer recognized as a historical personage by the Roman Catholic Church, was one of the most revered saints in medieval and Renaissance times.
 - 1. Her pagan father was said to have locked the beautiful Barbara in a tower to protect her purity. She asked that the bathhouse there include three windows as a reference to the Trinity.
 - 2. Infuriated by her conversion, her father had her prosecuted, and she was sentenced to death. Her father carried out her beheading and was later struck dead by lightning.

Works Discussed:

Jan van Eyck: *Virgin and Child with Chancellor Nicolas Rolin*, 1430s, oil on panel, 2'2" x 2'½", Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Virgin and Child with Saints Donatian and George with the Canon Georg van der Paele, 1436, oil on panel, 4' x 5'1¾", Groeningemuseum, Bruges.

The Virgin and Child in an Interior (Lucca Madonna), c.1436, oil on panel, 2'1¾" x 1'7½", Städelches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main.

Triptych with the Virgin and Child, c. 1437, oil on oak panel, center: 1'1" x 10¾", wings: 1'1" x 6½", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden.

Virgin and Child in a Church, c. 1439, oil on oak panel, 1¼" x 5½",
Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin.

Saint Barbara, 1437, silverpoint on paper, 1¼" x 7", Koninklijk Museum voor
Schone Kunsten, Antwerp.

Gerard Loyet: *Reliquary of Charles the Bold*, c. 1467, gold and enamel,
H: 2'9 ½", Cathedral of St. Paul, Liège.

Master of 1499: *Diptych of the Abbot Christiaan de Hondt*, 1470–99, oil on
panel, each panel: 11¾ x 5½", Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten,
Antwerp.

Essential Reading:

Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*, chapter 5.

Supplementary Reading:

Harbison, *The Play of Realism*.

Pächt, *Van Eyck and the Founders of Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapter 3.

Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapter 7.

Purtle, *The Marian Paintings of Jan van Eyck*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why did inscriptions play such an important role in Jan van Eyck's religious paintings?
2. Why is the image of the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child so dominant in Van Eyck's religious art?

Lecture Six

Jan van Eyck's Portraits

Scope: An essential development in Renaissance culture is the rise of interest in the individual, manifested by the growth of portraiture in painting and its dissemination from the ranks of nobility to government officials, wealthy merchants, and prominent artisans. Jan van Eyck's portraits convey a sense of the self-worth of the subjects, whether a church official, a goldsmith, his wife, or a wealthy couple.

Both historical evidence and contemporary criticism reveal Van Eyck as an artist with a strong sense of his own gifts. The "documentary" nature of his portraits—in their specific characterizations of sitters and in inscriptions on paintings or their frames—was unique to Van Eyck. Realistic as they are, we must remember that these small yet compelling paintings are products of the imagination, not exact visual records.

Outline

- I. Jan van Eyck's surviving portraits present a range of sitters that is consonant with the expansion of patronage beyond nobles and clerics. His frequent signing and dating of these paintings indicates an artist with a strong but not overweening sense of self-respect.
 - A. Van Eyck's motto, "*als ich kan*" ("as I am able to do"), found on the frames of several paintings, is ambiguous. Did it mean "the best I am able to do with my abilities" or "as only I am able to do"?
 - B. Several portraits were made for residents of Bruges, where Van Eyck lived. Bruges was the most important trade and financial center of northern Europe at the time. International bankers and merchants who lived there provided patronage to many Netherlandish artists.
- II. The intriguing *Portrait of a Man in a Red Turban* from 1433 has been described as a self-portrait of Van Eyck since the 17th century.
 - A. The sidelong glance of the sitter is reminiscent of later self-portraits of artists who sketched their images in a mirror. The frame carries a precise date (October 21, 1433), the artist's signature in Latin (translated as "Jan van Eyck made me"), and the artist's motto.
 - B. The bust-length figure features a self-assured man wearing an elaborate red turban. The long, straight nose; tightly drawn mouth; and shadow of facial hair convince us that this was a real person.
 - C. This painting could be the first independent self-portrait in European art. The social status of artists began to rise in the 15th century, sooner in Italy than in northern Europe.

- III. The *Portrait of Jan de Leeuw* from 1436 cites the sitter's name, birth date, and Van Eyck's authorship in Flemish.
- A. De Leeuw holds a ring in his right hand, indicating his status as an artisan. De Leeuw was a member and later dean of the Bruges guild of goldsmiths. A generation earlier, a member of the bourgeoisie would not have considered commissioning a portrait.
 - B. Van Eyck seems to have scrutinized every inch of the sitter's face, reproducing the veins and other features in detail and convincing viewers that they see truth itself, rather than its translation into paint.
 - C. While De Leeuw is not as forbidding in appearance as the *Man in the Red Turban*, both have the same steady gaze that meets our own.
- IV. Even more unusual is the *Portrait of Margaret van Eyck*, the painter's wife. The frame's inscription gives an exact date (June 17, 1439), the sitter's identity, her age of 33, and the artist's name and motto.
- A. The Latin inscription, which emphasizes that Van Eyck "made me," posits an identification between sitter and portrait that seems to admit no differences between them.
 - B. Neither idealized nor sentimentalized, the portrait preserves Margaret's public persona at a time when portraits of women outside the highest levels of the nobility were almost unheard of.
 - C. Only the high, tiny waistline and somewhat awkward rendering of the right arm strike the modern viewer as nonnaturalistic, but these aspects reflect prevailing concepts of beauty and fashion.
 - D. The ornate veil over Margaret's headdress displays the lacework for which Bruges is still famous. Her fur-lined wool robe was an expensive, desirable article of apparel.
- V. The *Portrait of Baudouin de Lannoy* shows the governor of the town of Lille and one of the first knights in the Order of the Golden Fleece, begun by Philip the Bold in 1430. He wears the collar of the order in this portrait.
- A. The sitter is richly dressed and holds a staff of office, indicating his position in the Burgundian administration.
 - B. Most striking is his face—hard, cold, and craggy, with a low brow and crooked nose—an uncompromising presentation of a nobleman.
- VI. The *Portrait of Cardinal Niccolò Albergati* provides a case study of the artist at work because a drawing closely related to the painting is extant.
- A. Albergati was in Bruges for four days in 1431, negotiating a peace treaty among England, France, and Burgundy. If this portrait is of Albergati, the drawing for it might have been made in 1431.
 - B. An inscription on the original frame, now lost, reputedly identified the sitter as Albergati but gave a date of 1438. The church council of

Ferrara in Italy opened that year, and Van Eyck may have been a member of Philip the Good's delegation.

- C. Some scholars dispute the identification of Albergati, stating that the hairstyle and dress are those of a secular figure, not an ecclesiastic.
 - D. The medium is silverpoint, a delicate mode of drawing in which a metal-tipped stylus is pulled through a sheet of paper covered with a ground, leaving an indelible line. Of the 600 15th-century Netherlandish drawings that survive, this is the only one that can be attributed with absolute certainty.
- VII. The *Arnolfini Portrait* of 1434 was unparalleled in its day for setting two sitters—traditionally identified as Italian merchant Giovanni Arnolfini and his wife, Giovanna Cenami, who lived in Bruges—in a highly detailed interior. It is the earliest full-length, double portrait known to date.
- A. The meaning of this painting and the identity of the sitters have generated many scholarly articles, including Erwin Panofsky's famous essay in 1934. That article identified Van Eyck's use of disguised symbolism, with both secular and sacred imagery to support the concept of marriage as a legal institution and a religious event.
 - B. The most important visual elements for this theory are the joined hands of the man and woman; the raised right hand of the man (as if taking an oath); the convex mirror on the back wall, with the reflection of two additional figures in the room; and the inscription on the wall meaning "Jan van Eyck was here 1434," phrased in a manner closer to legal formulations than to his typical signature.
 - C. Other elements that hint at marriage are the dog, often a symbol of fidelity, and the bed in the background, often found in the best room of 15th-century homes. Some critics view the woman as pregnant; others say her pose reflects a desire for fertility.
 - D. No documentary evidence firmly identifies the sitters, though it's widely accepted that the patron was an Italian merchant living in Bruges.
 - E. Scholars still argue over this and other issues. Do all objects in the room carry symbolic meaning? Does the orange on the windowsill refer to the fruit of paradise and Adam and Eve, or does it indicate the status of those who could afford imported luxuries? Are the man's shoes off to suggest a sacramental rite or to signify a domestic space? Is this a real room or an imaginary construct? Some of the objects were added after the underdrawing. Does this lessen or increase the chances of their having symbolic weight?
 - F. We have so many questions and so few answers because this is an undocumented painting and unlike any other of its century in conception, ambition, and detailed execution.

- G. This unusual, innovative, and still captivating painting makes us believe in the world the painter has created as plausible. Whatever the patrons and Van Eyck had in mind, they have become immortal through art.

Works Discussed:

Jan van Eyck: *Portrait of a Man in a Red Turban*, 1433, oil on panel, 10¼ x 7½", National Gallery, London.

Portrait of Jan de Leeuw, 1436, oil on oak panel, 9¾ x 7½", Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Portrait of Margaret van Eyck, 1439, oil on panel, 1¾ x 10¼", Groeningemuseum, Bruges.

Portrait of Baudouin de Lannoy, 1435, oil on oak panel, 10¼ x 7¾", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Kassel, Germany.

Portrait of Cardinal Niccolò Albergati, 1438, oil on panel, 1'1½" x 10¾", Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Drawing for *Portrait of Cardinal Niccolò Albergati*, 1430s, silverpoint, 8¼ x 7", Kupferstich-Kabinett, Dresden.

Arnolfini Portrait, 1434, oil on panel, 2'8¼ x 1'11½", National Gallery, London.

Essential Reading:

Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*, chapter 5.

Supplementary Reading:

Borchert, *The Age of Van Eyck*.

Campbell, *The Renaissance Portrait*.

Harbison, *The Play of Realism*.

Nuttall, *From Flanders to Florence*, parts 1–2.

Pächt, *Van Eyck and the Founders of Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapter 3.

Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapter 8.

Seidel, *Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait: Stories of an Icon*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why did Jan van Eyck paint a portrait of his wife at a time when this was so unusual?
2. Why did contemporary patrons choose Van Eyck as their portraitist?

Lecture Seven

Rogier—Religious Paintings

Scope: Rogier van der Weyden, active in Tournai and Brussels, was likely trained by Robert Campin. He and Van Eyck would become the most influential northern European artists of the 15th century. Rogier retained the symbolic system of Van Eyck but laid greater stress on the role of human experience in sacred history. Many of his major altarpieces and devotional paintings explore the psychological and emotional implications of Christ's dual nature as human and divine. Rogier's concept of his calling as a painter is manifested in *Saint Luke Drawing the Virgin Mary*, which may contain a self-portrait and refers directly to the composition of Van Eyck's *Rolin Madonna*.

Outline

- I. Born and trained in Tournai, Rogier van der Weyden (called Rogier; c. 1399–1464) spent most of his career in Brussels. Evidence indicates that Campin was his master. He was named the town painter in 1436. None of his important works for the town survived. Though never a Burgundian court painter, he received commissions from Philip the Good and his courtiers.
 - A. Rogier participated in religious life. He belonged to a *confraternity*, a lay group that carried out charitable activities, and achieved prosperity through bequests and paintings for religious institutions.
 - B. Unlike Van Eyck, Rogier never signed or dated his extant paintings, and only three of them can be firmly documented. Establishing the development of his style is difficult, and attempts to place his paintings in chronological order are conjectural.
- II. *The Deposition* was commissioned by the Archer's Guild in Leuven for a chapel in the Church of Our Lady Outside the Walls. Crossbows, the guild's symbol, are found in the tracery. This large painting, made by 1443, was copied by many artists for years.
 - A. Ten figures are crowded in a shallow space against a gold background as the body of Christ is taken down from the cross. The space is irrational, too small to contain the figures.
 - B. The cramped space focuses viewers on the figures' shared grief, an intensely emotional moment frozen in time.
 - C. At each end of the painting, the figures turn inward to close off the composition and contain emotion in the compact group. Christ's lifeless body is held up to emphasize the connection between his sacrifice and the Eucharistic service that would have been performed in

front of the painting. The pose of Mary, who faints beneath her son, echoes her son's and emphasizes her role as a co-redeemer.

- D. In contrast to Van Eyck's emphasis on the reproduction in perfect form of the world of sight, Rogier focuses on the visual expression of individual internal experience. His work is admired for its balance of narrative and meditative content and its sheer beauty.

III. *The Nativity Altarpiece* was probably commissioned by Pieter Bladelin, a Burgundian treasurer. This work was made for Bladelin's private chapel or the Church of St. Peter and Paul.

- A. The composition of the central panel and the figure style are reminiscent of Campin's *Nativity* and bear witness to Rogier's early training. Visual description works without verbal inscription, unlike so much of Van Eyck's art. The artist also places his main figures in large scale at the foreground, even with a distant setting behind them.
- B. The prominent inclusion of the patron in front of the main scene is new. An event from Christian history is now witnessed, though perhaps in a visionary sense, by a real 15th-century figure.
- C. The marble column as one of the supports for the stable is likely related to nonbiblical accounts of the birth of Jesus, when Mary is said to have supported herself against a column.
- D. The wings of the triptych also show nonbiblical visions, derived from the *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine, a popular compendium of biblical stories and saints' lives. To the left, the Roman emperor Augustus sees the Virgin Mary and Christ Child enthroned on an altar in the sky. To the right, a star leads the Magi to Bethlehem. Both symbolize the power of this new king over East and West.
- E. Rogier visually brings together different times and places to create a Christian history that transcends time through the piety of the donor.

IV. *The Last Judgment Altarpiece* rivals the *Ghent Altarpiece* in scale and ambition. The patron, Nicolas Rolin, chancellor to the Duke of Burgundy, commissioned the work for the Hôtel-Dieu, the hospital he endowed in the Burgundian town of Beaune. The work is a polyptych with 15 panels.

- A. The exterior of the altarpiece, organized similarly to the *Ghent Altarpiece*, shows Rolin and his third wife flanking representations of Saints Sebastian and Anthony. At the top we see the Annunciation.
- B. Opening the wings reveals a unified vision of the Last Judgment. There is both a literal and compositional weighing of good and evil.
- C. Christ is shown formally in a frontal pose, seated on a rainbow with a sword, a lily, and angels. He raises his right hand to bless those who will enter heaven, while his left hand presses downward to reject those who will march toward hell.

- D. The Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, the 12 apostles, and a few saints hover above the Earth. The archangel Michael stands on the Earth, holding a scale to weigh the souls of humans.
- E. Although many elements of the composition are conventional, Rogier reverses the order of medieval representations of the Last Judgment, so that good souls unburdened by sin rise and bad ones sink.
- F. Other Last Judgment scenes featured demons torturing the damned, but here, Rogier emphasized the internal experience of damnation through the grimacing faces and hunched postures of the lost souls.

V. *The Adoration of the Magi Altarpiece* (also called the *Columba Altarpiece*) was in Cologne, Germany, by the mid-1460s and in the Church of St. Columba in the early 19th century.

- A. Three scenes from the early life of Christ are shown: the Annunciation (left), the Adoration of the Magi (center), and the Presentation in the Temple (right). The major figures are arranged across the width of the altarpiece, helping to unite scenes disparate in time and location.
- B. The frontal composition of the Adoration scene and the rich garb of the Magi lend a monumental sense to this depiction. The Annunciation shows an elegant room, with conventional symbols of the Virgin. Simeon and Hannah's recognition of the Savior in the Presentation is heralded by the use of profile poses and pensive faces.
- C. The typically thoughtful expressions of Rogier's figures create a sense of solemnity amid splendor.

VI. For *The Crucifixion*, the theme is taken out of its narrative context to serve as a kind of icon of suffering and salvation.

- A. Only Christ, the Virgin Mary, and Saint John the Evangelist are shown, as in *The Deposition*, but with even more restraint. We sense a moment of deep emotion, frozen forever. The shallow space forces us to focus on the figures and their feelings.
- B. The limited number of colors avoids distraction from the essence of the painting's meaning. The beauty of Mary's and John's poses serves to convey their experience, allowing us vicariously to identify with them.

VII. *Saint Luke Drawing the Virgin* is both a devotional painting and a meditation on art itself.

- A. The Virgin Mary nurses the Christ Child in a domestic interior. Saint Luke kneels before them to make a silverpoint drawing of their likeness. At right in another room is Saint Luke's symbol, the ox, resting under a lectern with a book, clearly meant to be the Gospel of Saint Luke. Luke was the patron saint of European painters.

- B. Rogier based his composition on Jan van Eyck's *Virgin and Child with Chancellor Nicolas Rolin*, and some scholars believe that the saint's features are likely Rogier's own. Such references to Netherlandish art, artists, and practices may indicate Rogier's pride in his profession, but they can also be read as a profession of personal piety.

Works Discussed:

Rogier van der Weyden: *Deposition (Descent from the Cross)*, 1435–43, oil on panel, 7'2½" x 8'7¼", Museo del Prado, Madrid.

The Nativity Altarpiece (The Middleburg Altarpiece), c. 1440s, oil on oak panel, central panel: 2'11¾" x 2'11", each wing: 2'11¾" x 1'3¾", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin.

The Last Judgment Altarpiece (Beaune Altarpiece), 1443–52, oil on panel, 7¾" x 18'4½" (open), Musée de l'Hôtel-Dieu, Beaune, France.

Columba Altarpiece (The Adoration of the Magi Altarpiece), c. 1455, oil on oak panel, central panel: 4'6¼" x 5'¼", each wing: 4'6¼" x 2'3½", Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

The Crucifixion, c. 1450s, oil on oak panel, 10'8" x 6'3½", Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo, El Escorial, Madrid.

Saint Luke Drawing the Virgin, 1435–40, oil and tempera on panel, 4'6 1/8" x 3'7 5/8", Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lee Higginson, 93.153.

Essential Reading:

Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*, chapter 6.

Supplementary Reading:

De Vos, *Rogier van der Weyden*.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Rogier van der Weyden: St. Luke Drawing the Virgin: Selected Essays in Context*.

Pächt, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapter 1.

Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapter 9.

Questions to Consider:

1. The art historian Erwin Panofsky once wrote, "Rogier's world is at once physically barer and spiritually richer than Jan van Eyck's." Do you agree or disagree? Why?
2. Why might Rogier have used his own features for the image of Saint Luke in his painting *Saint Luke Drawing the Virgin Mary*?

Lecture Eight

Rogier—Devotional Paintings and Portraits

Scope: The interest in human emotional response to the ideas and narratives of Christianity played a role in other devotional paintings by Rogier van der Weyden, some of them more intimate in scale and private in function than his larger altarpieces. In addition to painting religious pictures, Rogier was an accomplished portraitist who received a number of commissions from members of the ducal court of Burgundy, both native and foreign. The figures in his portraits seem even more reserved than those in Van Eyck's paintings, with their gazes averted from the viewer's space. These portrait diptychs of sitters in prayer formed a significant part of portrait production in the 15th century and into the 16th and demonstrate that modern concepts of a world divided between sacred and secular realms did not always hold true in the past.

Outline

- I. Two smaller devotional paintings exemplify the richness of Rogier's pictorial thought.
 - A. The *Miraflores Altarpiece (Mary Altarpiece)* was given to the Charterhouse of Miraflores by John II of Castile in 1445. Rogier's art, like Jan van Eyck's, was popular in Spain.
 1. This nonfolding triptych shows an unusual choice of stories from the life of the Virgin Mary: the Holy Family, the Lamentation, and the Resurrection of Christ before his mother.
 2. Each scene features two to three figures, framed behind stone arches that resemble a cathedral's portals. In each case, narrative is suppressed to make the scene a timeless image for contemplative devotion.
 3. The colors of the Virgin's garments are symbolic. The white robe in the Holy Family scene symbolizes her purity. The red robe in the Lamentation scene symbolizes her compassion with Christ. The blue robe in the Resurrection scene symbolizes her faith and eventual role as queen of heaven.
 - B. The *Braque Triptych* is named for Jehan Braque and his wife, Catherine de Brabant, of Tournai. She apparently commissioned the painting as a memorial to her husband after he died in 1452. It is likely a private devotional work.
 1. When closed, the painting shows the donors' coats of arms. On the frame, an inscription in French states, "See, you who are so proud and avaricious, my body was once beautiful but is now food for worms." At right, a cross carries an inscription from the book of

Ecclesiastes about the bitterness of death. The exterior image warns of the vanity of human pride and pursuits.

2. In contrast, the interior shows a beautiful landscape scene across three panels, with five half-length figures: Saint John the Baptist, the Virgin Mary, Christ, Saint John the Evangelist, and Mary Magdalene.
3. The central panel shows Christ in a frontal pose, holding an orb, a symbol of earthly power, in his left hand and making a blessing with his right hand. The solemnity of the pose recalls Byzantine icons.
4. Texts appear above each head. The text for the Magdalene discusses how she anointed Christ's feet after moistening them with tears.
5. Holy figures in half length had been depicted before in triptychs but never against such a detailed landscape. Portraits in half length set against landscapes became popular shortly after this painting was made.

II. *The Virgin and Child with Four Saints (Medici Madonna)* is evidence of the theory that Rogier visited Italy in 1450, a jubilee year for the church.

- A. This atypical 15th-century Netherlandish painting shows the Virgin and Christ Child surrounded by four saints in a semicircle, a popular Italian format called a *sacra conversazione* ("holy conversation").
- B. The saints are, from left, Peter, the first pope; John the Baptist; Cosmos; and Damian. The latter two were the patron saints of the Medici family in Florence. Also seen is a fleur-de-lis, a symbol of Florence.
- C. Although the Medicis are likely patrons of the work, it is unclear whether Rogier painted it in Italy or, more likely, had it sent from his workshop after his return. Italian collectors were fascinated by Netherlandish artists' skilled use of oil paint.
- D. The approach to the human form was quite different in the two artistic traditions in the 15th century. Rogier's figures are typically elongated and slender, while Italian artists favored solid, more accurately proportioned figures.

III. Rogier was an accomplished portraitist who received commissions from highly placed patrons in the Burgundian realm.

- A. An unusual manuscript illumination of Duke Philip the Good served as the frontispiece for the *Chroniques de Hainaut*, a history of a Burgundian territory completed in 1448.
 1. Despite a lack of evidence, there is general scholarly agreement that this frontispiece was painted by Rogier. It is the only portrait

of Philip the Good by this artist to survive in the original.

2. The elegantly wasp-waisted Philip, dressed in black, stands under a canopy of honor to receive the manuscript from a kneeling scribe. The figures to the duke's left, including his young son, Charles the Bold, wear the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece. To the duke's right stand Nicolas Rolin and Jean Chevrot, Bishop of Tournai.

B. The *Portrait of Charles the Bold* is likely a workshop copy of a lost original.

1. The half-length depiction shows the duke wearing the Golden Fleece collar and grasping a sword around its hilt.
2. In portraits, Rogier rejected Van Eyck's particularity for a more generalized approach to facial structure and costume. Any idiosyncratic characteristics of the sitter were suppressed to create an aristocratic portrait type.

C. The *Portrait of Francesco d'Este* of about 1460 suggests the cosmopolitan nature of the Burgundian court. Francesco, an illegitimate son of the Duke of Ferrara, lived much of his life in the Burgundian territories after receiving military training in Brussels in 1444.

1. The same simplification of features can be seen here as in the portrait of Charles the Bold. Francesco's long nose and sad eyes make him recognizable.
2. The meaning of the hammer and ring he holds has never been discovered. They may refer to a personal emblem, motto, or tournament prize of Francesco's.

D. Rogier was the first Netherlandish artist to work frequently with the portrait diptych, in which the sitter was paired with a depiction of the Virgin Mary. The *Portrait of Philippe de Croy*, today in Antwerp, may have been paired originally with the *Madonna and Child* in San Marino, California.

1. De Croy was a member of one of the most important Burgundian noble families. An administrator of the territory of Hainault, he would become a knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece.
2. The image of De Croy praying to the Virgin and Child demonstrated his piety and served as a stimulus for prayer. The gold background of the panel showing the sacred figures takes the setting out of the here and now and makes it a timeless vision.
3. It is clear from the orientation of De Croy's pose that the painting had a companion piece originally, though scholars disagree on what it was.

E. One of the most beautiful portraits of the 15th century depicts an

unidentified woman. The *Portrait of a Lady* is characterized by the same refinement of conception and technique as Rogier's portraits of men.

1. We see a woman in near half-length, her hands folded demurely together, gazing down, but this beauty's aristocratic elegance is still projected here by her long face, full lower lip, and heavily lidded eyes. The astonishing portrayal of her transparent veil brings attention to her pallor. The tightly drawn red belt gives her the prized silhouette of the 15th century.
 2. This portrait is truly a masterpiece in its balancing of abstraction and specificity to make a kind of secular icon of a contemporary ideal.
- F. A silverpoint drawing of another young woman shows equal delicacy of technique in another format.
1. Though none of the few drawings attributed to Rogier can be securely authenticated, this silverpoint drawing is among the most widely accepted.
 2. The figure is less idealized and more approachable than that in the previous portrait. The planes of the headdress are depicted in great detail, and the strong light on her face aids in rendering the roundness of her bulging eyeballs and her slightly pudgy chin and jawline. She strikes us as a real person.

Works Discussed:

Rogier van der Weyden: *Miraflores Altarpiece (Mary Altarpiece)*, c. 1445, oil on panel, each panel: 2'4" x 1'5", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin.

The Braque Triptych, c.1451–61, oil on panel, open: 1'4¼" x 1'1½", closed: 1'3¾" x 11½", Musée du Louvre, Paris.

The Virgin and Child with Four Saints (Medici Madonna), c.1450, oil on panel, 1'8¾" x 1'3", Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main.

Frontispiece to the *Chroniques de Hainaut*; c. 1448; watercolor, gold, pen and ink on paper; 1'5¼" x 1¼"; Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique; Brussels.

Portrait of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, c. 1460, oil on oak panel, 1'7¾" x 1'½", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin.

Portrait of Francesco d'Este, c. 1460, oil on panel, overall: 12½ x 8¾", painted surface, each side: 11¾ x 8", The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Portrait of Philippe de Croy, c. 1460, oil on oak panel, 1'7¼" x 11¾", Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp.

Madonna and Child (San Marino Madonna), c. 1460, oil on oak panel, 1'7½" x 1'½"; courtesy of The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens; San Marino, California.

Portrait of a Lady, c. 1460, oil on panel, painted surface: 13 3/8 x 10 1/16", panel: 14 1/16 x 10 5/8", framed: 24 x 21 x 4½", Andrew W. Mellon Collection, Image © 2007 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art; Washington.

Drawing of a Young Woman, c. 1440, silverpoint on paper, 6½ x 4½", British Museum, London.

Essential Reading:

Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*, chapter 6.

Supplementary Reading:

Borchert, *The Age of Van Eyck*.

De Vos, *Rogier van der Weyden*.

Campbell, *The Renaissance Portrait*.

Nuttall, *From Flanders to Florence*, parts 1–3.

Pächt, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapter 6.

Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapter 9.

Questions to Consider:

1. What does it say about 15th-century society in northern Europe and the functions of portraiture that patrons would want their portraits painted showing them in the act of prayer?
2. Why would Italian patrons want to commission or buy Netherlandish paintings?

Lecture Nine

Petrus Christus—Heir to Van Eyck and Rogier

Scope: Although we know little of the life of Petrus Christus, we can see in his works that he was greatly influenced by both Van Eyck and Rogier. However, Christus made important contributions of his own. His fascination with single-point perspective was unprecedented in northern Europe, as seen in his *Nativity*. In fact, Christus was the first Northern Renaissance artist to use this type of perspective. In addition, his single-figure portraits, such as *Portrait of a Carthusian*, *Portrait of Edward Grymeston*, and *Portrait of a Lady*, were distinguished by interior spaces enveloping the sitters. The career of Petrus Christus is an interesting one for us, partly because of his relationship to these earlier masters and partly because of his own contributions to the art of this period.

Outline

- I. Like Jan van Eyck before him, Petrus Christus (c. 1410–75/6) was a native of the northern Burgundian territories who immigrated to Bruges.
 - A. The beautiful, calm quality of Christus's figures indicates his attention to Van Eyck's art.
 - B. Rogier's influence is also present, especially in Christus's approach to composition.
 - C. Yet Christus was not simply an imitative artist. His fascination with single-point perspective was unprecedented in northern Europe, and he made singular contributions to the art of portraiture.
- II. Little is known about Petrus Christus's life. In 1444, he joined the painters' guild in Bruges, paying citizenship fees to enter. He was born in a small town near the Belgian-Dutch border.
 - A. Christus was married by 1463, when he and his wife were listed as members of the Confraternity of the Dry Tree in Bruges. Given that this confraternity was socially exclusive, Christus's status in town must have been fairly high.
 - B. We know Christus represented the guild in a few legal proceedings, but apart from that, we know little of his life. He died in late 1475 or 1476.
- III. Like Van Eyck, Christus signed and dated a number of his paintings. One of them was *Portrait of a Carthusian* of 1446.
 - A. This painting is linked to Van Eyck's style in the pose of its subject, its lighting, details, and careful arrangement of pictorial elements.
 - B. The painting shows a lay brother wearing the white robes of the

monastery. Lit from the right, the subject looks at us a bit from the side with a steady gaze.

- C. In the reddish background, we can look into the corner of the room behind the sitter. We have a real sense of space around the figure,
 - D. At the bottom of what is an illusionistic frame, we see where the painting is signed and dated in Latin and Greek.
 - E. The prominent fly above the signature and date has been described as a symbol of death or transience. The suggestion is that the painting will remain after the sitter dies, the *vanitas* symbolism seen in Rogier's work.
- IV. The *Portrait of Edward Grymeston*, also from 1446, shows the same pose and strong lighting as in *Portrait of a Carthusian*, but there are differences.
 - A. In this portrait, a man wearing colorful secular garb is holding a chain of office. The sitter, an Englishman, was Henry VI's ambassador to Calais and, later, to the court of Philip the Good in Brussels.
 - B. Studies indicate that this work and *Portrait of a Carthusian* used the same pattern drawing for the head, with simple alterations of the features, costume, and setting. Grymeston's face is less detailed than in the previous portrait. The setting, however, is more elaborate.
 - C. Christus may have had little time to complete the painting, which could explain the reuse of a pattern and the more summary execution of Grymeston's portrait.
 - D. A silverpoint drawing of an unidentified man with a falcon, made close in time to the two portraits from 1446, suggests Christus's careful approach to portrait planning.
 1. The man's head and bust are rendered in extreme detail. The falcon, the room details, and the man's hands are more summarily executed.
 2. We assume that such preparatory drawings for portraits were made routinely in the 15th century, but few are left today.
 - V. *A Goldsmith in His Shop, Possibly Saint Eligius*, of 1449 is an ambitious portrait, larger than most painted by Christus. It shows the influence of Van Eyck on this artist, specifically, the *Arnolfini Portrait*.
 - A. The painting shows almost life-size figures of a man and woman and a craftsman seated at a workbench. We are in a metalsmith's shop. The painting could have been made for the Guild of Smiths.
 - B. The richly dressed couple inspects a ring being held up. A cloth girdle on the workbench suggests marriage.
 - C. Who is the goldsmith? Some scholars suggest that it was a vocational portrait of any kind of goldsmith. Others think it represents Saint

Eligius, a 7th-century bishop from Tournai who was the patron saint of goldsmiths. Still another view is that this work portrays a specific goldsmith, though there's no strong evidence of that.

- D. The highly detailed painting reveals Christus's craftsmanship and his ability to mimic other artists. In the convex mirror, an echo of the *Arnolfini Portrait*, we see a town, with two men standing outside the window of the goldsmith's shop.
 - 1. One of the men holds a falcon, the pet of noblemen and, perhaps, a symbol of worldliness or greed, setting up a contrast between the outside world and the inside world of the goldsmith's shop.
 - 2. The mirror's image suggests a lesson to the couple that despite their fine attire, they should behave in humble ways.

VI. The *Lamentation* shows the impact of Rogier—specifically, *The Deposition*—on Christus's religious paintings. Like his predecessor, Christus shows a group of figures posed to express emotion.

- A. There are differences, too. The figures are more spread out than in Rogier's painting, and a landscape opens up the scene and diffuses the strength of the emotion.
- B. Though the space in Christus's painting is more rational than Rogier's, as a whole, it lacks the emotion of its predecessor.
- C. The Virgin Mary's head and fainting pose are derived from Rogier's painting, as is the pose of the Magdalene, but Christus's space can actually contain this number of figures.
- D. Christus's aim was different from Rogier's, and here, he was true to his own style and artistic interests.

VII. Christus's *Nativity* from the 1450s shows Mary and Joseph with a group of angels to meditate upon the birth of the Savior.

- A. Joseph has removed his wooden clogs as a sign that he is in a sacred space. Shepherds wait their turn to see the Christ Child, who is shown on the ground with a sense of radiance around him, seen as a priest celebrating the Mass.
- B. We see the scene through an archway with a carved sculpture on it, as in Rogier's *Mary Altarpiece*.
- C. Most compelling is the representation of space itself. Christus used a ruler and compass to make the space mathematically precise using single-point perspective, in which orthogonal lines meet at the *vanishing point*. Christus became the first Northern Renaissance artist to use this type of perspective, and it became a hallmark of his paintings.

VIII. One of Christus's most charming paintings, *Virgin and Child in a*

Domestic Interior, from the 1460s, shows the Virgin and Christ Child in a spacious room. The details, including fruits on the windowsill and bright-green bed coverings, remind us of the *Arnolfini Portrait*.

- A. We look through an intermediate space, then to a doorway where Saint Joseph stands. His clothing reverses the red and blue colors of the Virgin's.
- B. In the 15th century, a growing interest in depictions of Joseph with the Holy Family emphasized the sacredness of marriage. In this painting, the line of perspective leads viewers directly from the Virgin and Child to Joseph.
- C. The sweet, heavy-lidded, sad eyes of the Virgin and Christ, typical of Christus, are particularly touching in this context.

IX. *Portrait of a Lady* is in relatively poor condition, but we can sense the original quality of the work, from about 1470.

- A. Christus exaggerated the difference in scale between the head and the body of the sitter, who may be a teenager. Her sidelong gaze and small, pursed mouth make her intriguing.
- B. The egg-shaped head emphasizes a simplicity of form. The very high forehead reflects the Burgundian fashion of plucking the hairline. The fur-lined gown, elaborate necklace, and headdress reveal a figure of substance.
- C. Some scholars identify the sitter as a member of the Talbot family of England. She is perhaps Anne or Margaret Talbot, whose aunt, Elizabeth, came to Bruges in 1468 to attend a wedding. Perhaps the young woman accompanied her aunt.
- D. The portrait recalls Rogier's *Portrait of a Lady* of 20 years earlier. Christus combines the Burgundian style of portraiture with his own suggestions of space.

X. Van Eyck and Rogier greatly influenced Christus, but his own contributions to the art of portraiture and his incorporation of single-point perspective must be remembered as well. For these reasons, Christus has recently been studied more. He may be considered a minor master, but he is an intriguing one.

Works Discussed:

Petrus Christus: *Portrait of a Carthusian*, 1446, oil on panel, 11½ x 8½", The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Portrait of Edward Grymeston, 1446, oil on panel, 12¼" x 10½", National Gallery (on loan), London.

Man with a Falcon, c. 1445–50, silverpoint, 7½ x 5¾", Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

A Goldsmith in his Shop, Possibly Saint Eligius, 1449, oil on panel, overall: 3'3 3/8" x 2'9¾", painted surface: 3'2 5/8" x 2'9½", Robert Lehman Collection, 1975.1.110, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Lamentation, c. 1455, oil on panel, 3'2½" x 6'2", Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.

Nativity, c. 1450, oil on panel, painted surface: 4'2¼ x 3'1 3/8", panel: 4'3¼" x 3'2¼", framed: 4'10¾" x 3'10 5/8", Andrew W. Mellon Collection, Image © 2007 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Virgin and Child in a Domestic Interior, c. 1460–67, oil on oak panel, 2'3 3/8" x 1'8 1/16", The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: Nelson Trust, 56-51. Photograph by Jamison Miller.

Portrait of a Lady, c. 1470, oil on panel, 11½ x 8¾", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin.

Essential Reading:

Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*, chapter 7.

Supplementary Reading:

Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Petrus Christus: Renaissance Master of Bruges*.

Pächt, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapter 2.

Upton, *Petrus Christus: His Place in Fifteenth-Century Flemish Painting*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Should Petrus Christus be considered a lesser artist because he so often depended on the art of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden? Are only the most innovative artists great?
2. How did Christus's innovations in portrait painting change the art of portraiture?

Lecture Ten

Hugo van der Goes

Scope: Hugo van der Goes was one of the most intriguing Netherlandish painters of the 15th century. He spent his career in Ghent, where the Van Eycks' *Ghent Altarpiece* made a clear impact, as seen in Van der Goes's *Fall of Man*. Its companion piece, *Lamentation*, shows that he turned to Rogier as a model for depicting human emotions.

Van der Goes's most impressive work, the *Adoration of the Shepherds* on the *Portinari Altarpiece*, was commissioned by Tommaso Portinari, the Medici Bank's representative in Bruges, and sent to the Portinari family chapel in Florence, which was located in the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova. In this large triptych, Van der Goes conveyed the climactic nature of the birth of Christ, presenting him as the still center of a vortex of shepherds, animals, and angels. The wings include portraits of Portinari, his wife, and their children. This altarpiece had a nearly immediate impact on Florentine artists, as demonstrated by Domenico Ghirlandaio's *Adoration of the Shepherds*.

Van der Goes was said to have entered a monastery as a lay brother at the height of his career and may have suffered from depression while there. Whether personally motivated or not, the haunting yet lyrical expressiveness of his religious art sets him apart from his contemporaries. Van der Goes's compositions would provide stimulus for many later painters.

Outline

- I. Hugo van der Goes (c. 1440–82) was one of the most intriguing second-generation Netherlandish painters of the 15th century, despite a relatively short career.
 - A. A Ghent native, he entered the guild there in 1467 and served as its dean from 1473 to 1475.
 - B. At the height of his fame, Van der Goes entered the monastery of the *Rode Klooster* (Red Cloister) near Brussels as a lay brother.
 - C. A 16th-century account of the monastery's history by Gaspar Ofhuys includes information about the painter.
 1. According to Ofhuys, famous people visited Van der Goes at the monastery, and "he was made more familiar with worldly pomp than with the ways of penance and humility."
 2. Ofhuys maintained that Van der Goes was disturbed by his workload and fell into a depression, possibly attempting suicide. He died in 1482.

- D. Only a few of Van der Goes's paintings survive, and even fewer are datable. We will focus on individual paintings, rather than try to gain any sense of development.
- II. The *Fall of Man* and the *Lamentation* make iconographic sense as a diptych but reveal that Van der Goes, like Rogier, investigated the use of irrational space to achieve certain effects.
- A. The *Fall of Man* reveals the artist's study of the *Ghent Altarpiece*, though his Adam and Eve are less physically perfect than Van Eyck's. The depiction of Satan as a lizard-type creature with a woman's face is unusual. The beautiful landscape represents paradise before the Fall.
 - B. The *Lamentation* shows Christ's personal sacrifice to redeem humankind. For this scene, it seems likely that Van der Goes drew inspiration from Rogier van der Weyden's popular model of the descent from the cross. As in Rogier's work, the sense of crowding of the figures around Christ conveys strong emotion. This contrasts with the eerie serenity of the first panel.
 - C. The differences we see in the two panels and Van der Goes's choice of different models for use in one work show us the artist's appreciation of the contributions of the first generation of Northern Renaissance painters.
- III. The *Adoration of the Magi* (also called the *Monforte Altarpiece* for the Spanish monastery where it was located after 1593) is a fragment of the original work. The wings are lost, yet it remains a powerful piece.
- A. Van der Goes shared with Petrus Christus an interest in single-point perspective to convey a message. Here, orthogonal lines lead to a vanishing point above the head of the first king, who kneels before the Virgin and Christ Child. The next king genuflects, and the third crosses into the space.
 - B. Our point of view is at the level of the first king but raised up a bit in space. The Christ Child looks directly at us, inviting us into this painting.
 - C. This painting's richness recalls the models and extraordinary details in works by Van Eyck and Rogier. The depiction of plants and flowers and the beauty of the Virgin evoke a mood of solemnity and reverence.
 - D. One detail, a squirrel running on a beam, breaks the sense of silence and solemnity in the rest of the work. The suggestion is that the humans realize something momentous is going on in a way that the squirrel would not.
- IV. Van der Goes used landscape to support the mood of his artworks, as in his drawing *Jacob and Rachel*. The story from Genesis is the first meeting of the shepherdess and her cousin, who later married.
- A. The medium is pen and wash with gouache, a thick, sticky substance seen in the white accents. It is a *chiaroscuro* drawing, a style contrasting light and dark tones that was popular in Italy but innovative in northern Europe.
 - B. The extensive landscape helps support the lyrical mood of the love story portrayed.
 - C. The drawing appears to be a finished work of art, not a pattern drawing. But because there was no market for drawings until the 16th century, it's more likely a presentation drawing to give a client a sense of the final work.
- V. Van der Goes's largest work, and the one we know the most about, is the triptych with the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, also called the *Portinari Triptych* after its Italian patrons.
- A. Tommaso Portinari, head of the Medici Bank branch in Bruges, and his wife, Maria Baroncelli, commissioned the work to go in the renovated chapel of Santa Egidio, located in the hospital of the Church of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence.
 - B. Likely commissioned between 1473 and 1476, the painting shows Tommaso with children Antonio and Pigello on the left and Maria with daughter Margherita on the right. Tommaso's portrait on the inner left wing was glued to the panel, probably added after he returned to Bruges after working in Florence. The triptych was shipped to Florence in 1483.
 - C. The exterior shows the Annunciation, done in grisaille. There is a strange tension here. The figures look frozen, and there is an unsettling quality to the depiction.
 - D. On the inside, the Portinaris are depicted on the wings with their patron saints, Thomas and Anthony Abbot for the men and Margaret and Mary Magdalene for the women. Other parts of the Nativity story are shown on the background. The landscape is continuous across all three panels.
 - E. Inside, the powerful composition of the Adoration uses single-point perspective to capture our attention. The vanishing point is right above the Virgin's head, and her hands lie at the center of the panel, emphasizing devotion of the Christ Child.
 - 1. Peasant shepherds stumble into the scene and stop cold in amazement. The angels dressed in liturgical vestments refer to the enactment of the Mass.
 - 2. The flowers are symbols of humility, purity, sorrow, and sacrifice associated with the Virgin Mary or Christ. The majolica jar is a Spanish medicine jar, which reminds us that the painting was

destined for a hospital. Through this motif, the artist makes clear that ultimate healing comes from God.

3. The presence of evil in the world, represented by a demon that lurks in the shadows, helps account for the subdued mood of the painting.
 4. Van der Goes's mastery of space to convey emotions is seen here in a very still center with activity frozen all around it. We look down into the painting as unseen guests.
- F. This work made a significant impact in Florence; its realistic figures, beautiful landscape, and oil technique caught the eye of Italian artists and patrons.
- G. The influence of the *Portinari Altarpiece* is seen in Domenico Ghirlandaio's *Adoration of the Shepherds* of 1485, made for the Sassetti Chapel in Florence. The work could have been the artist's tribute to Netherlandish art or a requirement of patron Francesco Sassetti, who also worked for the Medici Bank.
- VI.** In the *Death of the Virgin*, possibly a late work of Van der Goes, Christ's disciples mourn and pray around the Virgin Mary on her deathbed. Her pallor and upturned eyes indicate the very moment of death. Christ has just arrived in a celestial vision to convey her directly to heaven.
- A. The colors are limited and pale compared with other works, emphasizing a certain unreality. The apostles are individualized in their grief, each experiencing the effects of this death as if alone.
 - B. The space is manipulated so that the recession into the picture is very fast, again emphasizing a sense of unreality. We see the Virgin's transition from the earthly world to the spiritual one as a kind of dream.
- VII.** Van der Goes's 15-year career as an artist was short but influential. Though much of his work has been lost, what remains shows that he synthesized lessons learned from Van Eyck and Rogier in a truly individual way, notably in his attention to landscape, perspective, and space to convey emotion. Whether or not he suffered from mental illness, he portrayed the powerful conflict between secular and religious ambitions.

Works Discussed:

Hugo van der Goes: *Fall of Man*, c. 1470, oil on oakwood panel, 1'1¼" x 9", Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Lamentation, c. 1470, oil on oakwood panel, 1'1¼" x 9", Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Adoration of the Magi (Monforte Altarpiece), c. 1470, oil on panel, 4'9¾" x 7'11¼", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin.

Jacob and Rachel, c. 1470–75, pen and wash heightened with white on gray paper, 1'1¼" x 1'10½", Christ Church Picture Gallery, Oxford.

Portinari Triptych (open), 1470s, completed in 1483, oil on panel, 8'3½" x 19'2¾", Uffizi, Florence.

Portinari Triptych (closed), 1476, oil on panel, 8'3½" x 9'7½", Uffizi, Florence.

Death of the Virgin, c. 1470, oil on panel, 8'3½" x 4'7½", Groeningemuseum, Bruges.

Domenico Ghirlandaio: *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1485, tempera on panel, 5'5¾" x 5'5¾", Santa Trinita, Sassetti Chapel, Florence.

Essential Reading:

Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*, chapter 8.

Supplementary Reading:

Borchert, *The Age of Van Eyck*.

Nuttall, *From Flanders to Florence*, parts 2 and 4.

Pächt, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapter 6.

Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, epilogue.

Questions to Consider:

1. Should we trust Ofhuys's account of Van der Goes's illness and subsequent death? Why might Ofhuys have had mixed motives in reporting the artist's spiritual (we would say psychological) troubles?
2. Why would Tommaso Portinari want to place a Netherlandish triptych in his family chapel in Florence?

Lecture Eleven

Dieric Bouts and Geertgen tot Sint Jans

Scope: Two noteworthy 15th-century Netherlandish painters hailed from the town of Haarlem in the northern Netherlands. Dieric Bouts and Geertgen tot Sint Jans contributed to group portraiture and the use of landscapes in history painting, with an emphasis on naturalism gleaned from their predecessors.

Bouts began his career in Haarlem, then relocated to the town of Leuven, where he received commissions for portraits, religious paintings, and history paintings. His art reflected study of Rogier van der Weyden and evidenced his interest in the depiction of landscape. Bouts's best works were large-scale history paintings, including an altarpiece devoted to the Last Supper and two panels depicting scenes of medieval secular justice. In the first case, a rare original contract reveals details about the commission.

Little is known about Sint Jans except that he worked from about 1475 to 1495 and remained in Haarlem for his entire career. He lived at a monastery, the Commandery of the Knights of Saint John, and his most ambitious paintings were made for the Commandery church. Only the right wing of his *Crucifixion Altarpiece* survives. In this work and others, he used beautiful landscapes to support the scenes' emotions.

Outline

- I. Dieric Bouts (c. 1415–75) was born in Haarlem and likely raised and trained there. He married a woman from Leuven, an important university town in Brabant, where he moved no later than 1457.
 - A. From the 1450s on, Bouts's work was highly influenced by that of Rogier, the leading painter in Brabant at the time.
 - B. Bouts became the official town painter in Leuven in 1468. His most important paintings date from the 1460s and early 1470s.
- II. Bouts experimented with providing an environment for his portrait sitters. *Portrait of a Man* from 1462 shows a man resting his hands on a ledge and gazing out of the picture. He seems to be thinking.
 - A. Next to the man is an open window that reveals a rolling landscape. The use of *atmospheric perspective* creates a sense of naturalism by giving the sitter real space and making sense of the bright light.
 - B. Some have suggested that this work was part of a portrait diptych, but that seems unlikely because of the upward gaze and position of the hands.

- C. A portrait drawing attributed to Bouts from the late 1460s is similar in pose to this work. Bouts may have had a stock approach, using conventional poses with individualized facial features for each sitter.

- III. Bouts's small devotional images include *Virgin and Child*. Set against a dark background, the mother and child tenderly embrace.
 - A. The Virgin here is less idealized than in Rogier's work, perhaps reflecting Bouts's northern origins.
 - B. Is this painting based on a life study? We don't know, but its naturalism suggests this could be a real woman—a more approachable Virgin.
- IV. Bouts's greatest works were large-scale history paintings, both secular and religious. One of his most important was the *Altarpiece of the Holy Sacrament*, commissioned by the Brotherhood of the Holy Sacrament in Leuven in 1464 and installed in 1468.
 - A. This is the only 15th-century Netherlandish painting for which the original contract survives. The subjects and their relationships were fixed by a Humanist advisor, a local professor of theology.
 - B. On the wings are four scenes concerning God providing sustenance for humans at important points in history: the Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek, the Feast of the Passover, the Gathering of Manna, and Elijah in the Desert.
 - C. The figures are placed throughout the landscape setting, not just in the foreground. Bouts used landscape to establish the mood of the story, which is helpful for viewers because his figures are generally reserved.
 - D. The central scene of the Last Supper shows the apostles gathered around a large, formally posed Christ. The vanishing point goes right above his head, a clue to focus on him.
 - E. Christ blesses the host, as priests do during a Mass. The emphasis is on the sacrament of the Eucharist rather than on Christ's Passion.
 - F. Onlookers at right and left in the background are likely portraits of members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sacrament.
- V. In 1468, Bouts received another important commission, this one from the government of Leuven for several sets of panels to decorate the town hall. Only one set survives intact, a pair of panels with life-size figures representing the justice of Holy Roman Emperor Otto III.
 - A. The story, from a medieval chronicle, tells of a count who was falsely accused of attempting to seduce the wife of the 10th-century Holy Roman Emperor Otto III. The count actually refused the woman's advances, and in revenge, she denounced him to Otto, who ordered the count beheaded. The count's wife survived an ordeal by fire to clear

his name after his execution. Otto recognized his wife's perfidy and had her burned at the stake.

- B. The panel *Ordeal by Fire* was completed first and installed in 1473. The other, the *Execution of the Innocent Count*, was underway at Bouts's death in 1475. It was installed in 1481 after being finished by members of Bouts's workshop.
- C. Several distinct moments in the narrative are found in each panel.
 - 1. In the *Execution of the Innocent Count*, we see the emperor and empress talking outside their castle, while at left, the count speaks to his wife. In the foreground, she receives the head of the count.
 - 2. An innovation was to include a group portrait in a history painting. These other figures are likely members of the Leuven city council.
 - 3. The *Ordeal by Fire* portrays the countess holding a red-hot iron bar in her left hand and her late husband's head in her right. The bar does not harm her, proving her husband's innocence. The emperor is dismayed. Outside the room, the empress burns at the stake.
- D. Bouts's stolid depiction of a gruesome narrative is a bit incongruous, but this painting's large scale and incorporation of portraits of contemporaries must have impressed the citizens of Leuven.

VI. Geertgen tot Sint Jans remained in Haarlem for his entire career. Active from about 1475 to 1495, he lived at the headquarters of the Commandery of the Knights of Saint John, a hospital and a military monastic order. The artist's name means "little Gerry at Saint John's." Few of his paintings survive.

VII. Sint Jans's largest surviving work is the right wing of the *Crucifixion Altarpiece*, made for the high altar of the Commandery church. It was probably painted after 1483, when the order acquired relics of Saint John the Baptist from the Ottoman Empire. The central panel and left wing were destroyed during the 16th century.

- A. The exterior of the right wing shows the *Burning of the Bones of John the Baptist*, as ordered by the 4th-century Roman Emperor Julian, who revived pagan cults and tried to suppress the influence of Christianity.
 - 1. Like Bouts, Sint Jans used an extensive landscape. The Baptist's body is placed in a sarcophagus in the background.
 - 2. In the middle ground, a group of men holding bones depicts the recovery of Saint John's remains by the predecessors to the Commandery. They go to the city, where they are met by servants.
 - 3. Both groups contain portraits of contemporaries in the order, some wearing the eight-pointed Cross of Malta on their robes.
- B. The wing's interior depicts the *Lamentation*. The body of Christ is laid

on the ground. Roman soldiers take down the bodies of the thieves.

- 1. The painting seems influenced by Van der Goes's *Lamentation* and was, perhaps, copied from a drawing.
- 2. The figures convey emotion but are styled like those of Petrus Christus, somewhat doll-like.

VIII. The *Man of Sorrows* is an unusual private devotional painting and a powerful image despite its small size.

- A. The gold background seems archaic, but it is meant to transcend real time to present an eternal image.
- B. The figures seem cut off, but there's no evidence that this painting is a fragment of a larger work. As in Rogier's *Deposition*, figures are crowded in a tight space to emphasize emotion.
- C. The Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, John the Evangelist, and angels surround Christ, who stands bent over, holding the crucifix and bleeding. Christ's imploring look is meant to provoke a feeling of sorrow for the sacrifice necessitated by the sins of humankind.

IX. *Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness* shows a more naturalistic image, also meant for private contemplation. The saint sits with his head resting on his hand in a pose of melancholy thoughtfulness. His lamb, representing the Lamb of God, rests comfortably beside him.

- A. The gorgeous landscape isn't the desert of Palestine but something that would be more familiar to the people of Haarlem, a way to make Saint John more accessible.
- B. The wonderful trees and the far horizon of this landscape suggest an extension of understanding of nature itself.

X. A final example of natural effects used to create a transcendent mood is *Night Nativity*, probably from about 1490. The Virgin Mary bends over the Christ Child in the manger, while angels gather around. Joseph is barely visible in the background.

- A. The Christ Child is radiant, casting a supernatural light that falls on his mother and the angels. Yet the light falls in a natural way.
- B. The same thing happens outside the stable, where an angel glowing in the sky outshines the campfire that keeps the shepherds warm.
- C. The artist seems to have studied how light actually works to make the painting more convincing.

Works Discussed:

Dieric Bouts: *Portrait of a Man*, 1462, oil on panel, 12¼ x 8", National Gallery, London.

Portrait of a Young Man, late 1460–70, silverpoint on ivory-toned prepared paper, 8¼ x 6 11/16", Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts, SC 1939:3.

Virgin and Child, c. 1455–60, oil on panel, 8½ x 6½", Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis 1915 (30.95.280), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Altarpiece of the Holy Sacrament, 1464–67, tempera on panel, 6¾" x 9 7/8", Sint Pieterslerk, Louvain (Leuven), Belgium.

Execution of the Innocent Count, 1475–81, oil on panel, 10'8" x 5'11¾", Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels.

Ordeal by Fire, 1473, oil on panel, 10'8" x 5'11½", Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels.

Geertgen tot Sint Jans :

Burning of the Bones of John the Baptist, c. 1483–94, tempera on oak panel, 5'7¾" x 4'6¾", Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Lamentation, c. 1483–94, tempera on panel, 5'9" x 4'6¾", Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Man of Sorrows (Man van Smarten), 1485, oil on panel, 1'1" x 1½" (without frame: 10¼ x 9¾"), Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht, The Netherlands.

Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness, c. 1490, oil on oak panel, 1'4½" x 11", Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin.

Night Nativity, 1484–90, oil on oak panel, 1'1½" x 9¾", National Gallery, London.

Essential Reading:

Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*, chapters 7 (Bouts) and 9 (Geertgen tot Sint Jans).

Supplementary Reading:

Ainsworth, *Facsimile in Early Netherlandish Painting: Dieric Bouts's Virgin and Child*.

Châtelet, *Early Dutch Painting*, chapters 4 and 5.

Pächt, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapters 4 and 7.

Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, epilogue.

Questions to Consider:

1. What effect would the portraits of Leuven town officials found in Bouts's *Justice* panels have on their contemporary viewers?
2. How did Geertgen tot Sint Jans use the depiction of nature to enhance the spiritual qualities of his paintings?

Lecture Twelve

Hans Memling

Scope: German-born Hans Memling was drawn to Bruges in search of commissions from its wealthy population. Rogier van der Weyden, with whom he likely trained, influenced his compositional style, as did Jan van Eyck and Petrus Christus. Memling produced both large and small works, mostly for private individuals. He skillfully mixed artistic tradition with his own innovations during a period of political turmoil in Burgundy, which affected his patronage more than his style. Memling was sought after as a portraitist as well as a religious painter, and his portraits of sitters posed against landscapes attracted attention from as far away as Italy. His most brilliant surviving work is the *Diptych of Maarten van Nieuwenhove*.

Outline

- I. Born in Seligenstadt, Germany, Hans Memling (c. 1435–94) likely trained with Rogier van der Weyden in Brussels before arriving in Bruges by January 1465.
 - A. Memling was neither a court artist like Jan van Eyck nor a guild member like Petrus Christus. Instead, his patrons were mostly private individuals; about 20 percent of extant works were made for foreign patrons.
 - B. A solid member of the artisan class, Memling belonged to the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Snows and did not seem to aspire to a higher status.
- II. The politics of Burgundy changed dramatically during Memling's career. After a peak of prosperity and power under Duke Philip the Good, the situation deteriorated with the accession of Charles the Bold in 1467.
 - A. Charles's territorial aggressiveness led to his death in battle in 1477, leaving his daughter Mary as the only direct heir in Burgundy. Because France did not recognize matrilineal succession, Burgundy proper reverted to the king of France.
 - B. Mary retained rule of modern-day Belgium, the Netherlands, and a small part of Luxembourg and northern France. Mary's rule was contested in Bruges and other cities that wanted more freedom. Her death in 1482 left a young male heir, but her husband, Maximilian of Austria, held power as regent.
 - C. Maximilian's unpopular rule led to unrest—at one point, he was held captive in Bruges—but he ultimately subdued the rebellious towns.

This came at the price, however, of the Burgundian territories' independence.

- D. Memling had witnessed much turmoil and change by his death in 1494, yet none of it affected his style. His paintings combined his own innovations with the traditions of Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden, and even Petrus Christus.

III. Memling's largest triptych was the *Saint John Altarpiece*, commissioned for the high altar of the hospital of Saint John in Bruges. It is dated 1479.

- A. On the exterior wings are four kneeling donors with their patron saints: James, Anthony Abbot, Agatha, and Clare. The painted Gothic tracery and architecture reflect the architecture of the chapel.
- B. The interior of the altarpiece portrays scenes from the lives of the two Saint Johns, who were patrons of the hospital, and of the Virgin and Christ Child.
1. This painting was the first to show in one panel apocalyptic events of the Book of Revelation, the beheading of John the Baptist (left) and the vision of John the Evangelist on Patmos (right).
 2. Both wings depict extensive landscapes. Despite the sensational narrative, the figures are serene, typical of Memling's art.
- C. The composition of the central panel is based on Van Eyck's *Van der Paele Madonna* but is no simple imitation. It has the same symmetry but is set in front of a loggia instead of in a church. In the background are further narratives from the lives of the patron saints.
1. The Virgin and Child, shown with angels and saints, make for an intimate scene. Memling introduced the motif of having female saints (Catherine and Barbara here) kneel before the Virgin and Child, a variation of the *sacra conversazione* Rogier used.
 2. The figures are calm and elongated, again reflecting Rogier's influence. There is thorough attention to detail and rich color.

IV. A private devotional work, the *Triptych of John Donne*, is similar in composition to the *Saint John Altarpiece*. Saints Catherine and Barbara introduce the kneeling patron and his family to the Virgin and Child.

- A. John Donne (not the poet of later fame) was an English diplomat, a representative of Edward IV. He visited Flanders several times in the 1470s and 1480s, at least once with his family.
- B. Everything here is fresh and uplifting: the lovely female saints, the playful Christ Child, the solemn yet beautiful Virgin, and the overall careful execution.
- C. Donne may have asked that this work reflect the *Saint John Altarpiece*, or Memling may have standardized certain parts of his art to better serve his market.

V. Memling worked successfully in both large and small scales. In the latter category is the *Shrine of Saint Ursula*, commissioned for the hospital chapel of Saint John in Bruges. It was part of a reliquary shrine that contained eight scenes painted by Memling.

- A. On one of the smaller end panels are the Virgin and Child and two nuns, presumably the donors. At the opposite end is Saint Ursula with some of her virgin companions. The larger size of the two main female figures compares Ursula's sainthood to the Virgin's.
- B. The long sides of the shrine show three scenes from the story of the legendary Ursula. She was said to have been a 5th-century British princess who converted to Christianity. She required her fiancé, the son of a pagan king, to convert before their marriage.
1. Ursula traveled with 11,000 fellow virgins to Rome, where she met with her fiancé to be blessed by Pope Cyriacus—another fictional character. (The scenes set in Cologne included actual buildings from that town.)
 2. When the entourage returned to Cologne, they were killed by the barbarian Huns after Ursula spurned their king.
- C. Despite the sad story, Memling's depiction plays out like a fairy tale. The painting shows his limits as a narrative artist but it may also suggest that he did not take the story seriously.

VI. Among Memling's many portraits for foreign clients living in Bruges were portraits of Tommaso Portinari, head of the Medici bank in Bruges during the 1470s, and his wife, Maria Baroncelli.

- A. The two portraits were probably part of a marital triptych, but the panel with the Virgin and Child is missing.
- B. The bust-length portraits show the couple praying. Because the background has darkened over time, it is difficult to see the figures, especially Tommaso.
- C. Maria wears the same expensive headpiece, necklace, and rings as in Van der Goes's *Portinari Altarpiece*, painted several years later. Clearly, these were precious possessions.
- D. Memling's depiction of the couple is softer and more flattering than that of Van der Goes, yet it is also realistic.

VII. *Portrait of a Young Man at Prayer* from about 1485 to mid-1490s is probably also a marital triptych, missing panels showing the man's wife and the Virgin and Child. This adaptation of a window-type portrait had a landscape that likely was continuous across all three panels.

- A. The national identity of the man has been debated. Recent research supports a Spanish provenance.
- B. Certain defining characteristics of Memling's portraits are evident here.

The face is large compared with the head so as to focus on the features. Like other artists, Memling used stock head types and modified them from one individual to the next.

- C. The back of this painting shows a Spanish majolica vase on an oriental carpet. In it are flowers associated with the Virgin Mary. It seems to be a precedent for independent still-life paintings of flowers.

VIII. The most brilliant of Memling's surviving diptychs is the *Diptych of Maarten van Nieuwenhove* from 1487, a work in the tradition of Rogier that greatly expands the ambiance of the sitter.

- A. Van Nieuwenhove was from a leading Bruges family faithful to the cause of Maximilian. The family temporarily fell from power but regained its status as Maximilian reasserted control over the rebellious Flemish towns.
 1. Maarten van Nieuwenhove became a city councilor and, in 1497, a burgomaster (mayor) of Bruges.
 2. After Maximilian banished foreign merchants from Bruges to Antwerp, Memling turned to patricians, such as the Van Nieuwenhoves, as patrons during the 1480s and 1490s.
- B. We see Van Nieuwenhove wearing rich velvet clothing and with a manuscript open in front of him. Behind him is the image of his patron, Saint Maarten, naturalistically worked into the stained-glass window.
- C. On one panel, the Virgin offers a piece of fruit to the Christ Child as they enact their roles as the new Adam and Eve. The sitter's coat of arms and motto are shown in the window in the background at right.
- D. Another stained-glass window shows medallions of a hand reaching from the sky to scatter seeds on the ground, a play on the name Nieuwenhove, which means "new garden."
- E. A convex mirror shows the reflection of the sitter in prayer and the back of the Virgin's head, indicating that Van Nieuwenhove is in the presence of the Virgin and does not just "see" her as an internal vision.

IX. *Portrait of a Young Woman*, dated 1480, is the only independent female portrait by Memling to survive. A cartouche added in the 16th century and an inscription on the frame claim that the figure is the Persian Sibyl, an unlikely assertion.

- A. The young sitter was evidently a member of upper-class Bruges society, as indicated by her stylish dress, multiple rings, and crucifix decorated with gems and pearls. The careful depiction of the veil harkens to Rogier van der Weyden's *Portrait of a Lady*.
- B. Memling typically included hands in his portraits. Here, they are crossed, and the fingertips of the right hand extend onto the original frame, breaking the barrier between viewer and sitter.

X. Perhaps Memling's most important contributions to portrait painting were bust-length figures placed in front of landscapes. *Portrait of a Man with a Coin of the Emperor Nero* is an intriguing example.

- A. A man holds up an ancient Roman coin bearing a portrait of Nero. The lush landscape containing swans, a palm tree, and a sprig of laurel is not very Netherlandish.
- B. The latest theory identifies the sitter as Pietro Bembo, the Venetian emissary to Charles the Bold in 1473–74. His collection of antique coins and paintings included a diptych by Memling.
- C. Memling's influence in Italy is seen in Sandro Botticelli's *Portrait of a Young Man with a Medal of Cosimo de' Medici*. Botticelli has softened Memling's style, but the two artists' styles seem undeniably related.
- D. This work, like others, shows that Netherlandish painters were famous for their portraits as well as for their ability to describe the natural world.

XI. Memling successfully balanced tradition and innovation. His greatest contribution is probably in the realm of portraiture, with the development of the bust-length portrait in front of a landscape. He was one of the last great painters in the Bruges tradition.

Works Discussed:

Albrecht Dürer: *Emperor Maximilian I*, 1519, oil on lindenwood panel, 2'5" x 2', Kunsthistorisches Museum, Innsbruck.

Hans Memling: *Saint John Altarpiece*, 1479, oil on panel, central panel: 5'8" x 5'8¼", each wing: 5'9¼" x 2'7", Memling Museum, Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges.

Triptych of John Donne, c. 1475, oil on oak panel, central panel: 2'3¾" x 2'3¾", each wing: 2' 3 ¾" x 1', National Gallery, London.

Shrine of Saint Ursula, 1489, gilded wood and oil on panel, entire shrine: 3' x 3'3" x 1'4¼", Memling Museum, Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges.

Tommaso di Folco Portinari, 1470, oil on panel, overall: 1'5 3/8" x 1'1¼", painted surface: 1'4 5/8" x 1' 5/8", The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Maria Portinari, 1470, oil on panel, overall: 1'5 3/8" x 1'1 3/8", painted surface: 1'4 5/8" x 1' 5/8", The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Portrait of a Young Man at Prayer, c. 1485–94, oil on panel, 11½ x 8¾", Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

Diptych of Maarten van Nieuwenhove, 1487, oil on panel, each panel: 1'8½" x 1'4¼", Memling Museum, Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges.

Portrait of a Young Woman, 1480, oil on panel, 1'3" x 10½", Memling Museum, Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges.

Portrait of a Man with a Coin of the Emperor Nero, c. 1475, oil on panel, 1"¼" x 9¼", Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp.

Sandro Boticelli: *Portrait of a Young Man with a Medal of Cosimo de' Medici*, 1474, tempera on panel, 1'10½" x 1'5¼", Uffizi, Florence.

Essential Reading:

Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*, chapter 10.

Supplementary Reading:

Borchert, *The Age of Van Eyck*.

Borchert, et al. *Memling's Portraits*.

De Vos, *Hans Memling: The Complete Works*.

Nuttall, *From Flanders to Florence*, parts 1–4.

Pächt, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, chapter 8.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why might Memling have decided to pursue a strictly private career as opposed to seeking public commissions from the city of Bruges?
2. Some art historians have seen Memling's created world as too static and artificial. Do you agree? Why?

Timeline

1363	Philip the Bold becomes Duke of Burgundy.
1369	Philip the Bold marries Margaret of Flanders.
1378	End of Avignon papacy.
1384	Philip the Bold inherits the Netherlands.
1385	Construction begins on the Chartreuse de Champmol.
1395–1404	Claus Sluter: <i>Well of Moses</i> .
1404	Philip the Bold dies, succeeded by John the Fearless.
c. 1408–10	Boucicaut Master: <i>Book of Hours</i> .
1410	Robert Campin acquires citizenship in Tournai.
1414	Thomas à Kempis: <i>Imitatio Christi</i> .
1414–17	Council of Constance ends Great Schism.
1416	Limbourg brothers die before completing <i>Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry</i> ; Jean, Duke of Berry, dies.
1419	John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy, murdered; succeeded by Philip the Good.
1422	Henry V, King of England dies; succeeded by Henry VI.
c. 1425	Campin: <i>Merode Triptych</i> .
1426	Hubert van Eyck dies.
1432	Rogier van der Weyden is master in the Tournai guild; Jan van Eyck completes the <i>Ghent Altarpiece</i> .
1433	Jan van Eyck: <i>Portrait of a Man in a Red Turban</i> .
1434	Jan van Eyck: <i>Arnolfini Portrait</i> .
c. 1435–43	Rogier van der Weyden: <i>Deposition</i> .
c. 1440	Stefan Lochner: <i>Virgin in a Rose Bower</i> .
1441	Jan van Eyck dies.
1444	Campin dies; Petrus Christus in Bruges.
1446	Petrus Christus: <i>Portrait of Edward Grymeston</i> .
1449	Petrus Christus: <i>Goldsmith in His Shop, Possibly Saint Eligius</i> .

c. 1450Johannes Gutenberg invents movable type.

1452Election of Frederick of Hapsburg as Holy Roman Emperor.

1453End of the Hundred Years' War.

1455–85War of the Roses in England.

c. 1460Rogier van der Weyden: *Portrait of a Lady*.

1461Edward, son of Richard of York, crowned Edward IV, king of England.

1464Cosimo de'Medici becomes ruler of Florence.

1465Hans Memling in Bruges.

1467Death of Philip the Good of Burgundy; succeeded by Charles the Bold; Hugo van der Goes in Ghent.

1468–73Dieric Bouts: *Ordeal by Fire*.

1468–81Dieric Bouts: *Execution of the Innocent Count*

1469Lorenzo de'Medici becomes ruler of Florence.

1470s.....Martin Schongauer's early engravings.

1470–80Master of Mary of Burgundy: *Book of Hours*.

1471Thomas à Kempis dies.

Mid-1470s to.....Hugo van der Goes: *Portinari Altarpiece*.
early 1480s

1477Maximilian marries Mary of Burgundy; Charles the Bold dies at Battle of Nancy.

1480–90Martin Schongauer: *Temptation of Saint Anthony*.

1481Spanish Inquisition begins.

1482Peace of Arras; Mary of Burgundy dies; Maximilian inherits the Netherlands.

1483Edward IV dies; succeeded by Richard III; Louis XI dies; succeeded by Charles VIII of France.

1484Gerard David in Bruges.

1484–94Geertgen tot Sint Jans: *Burning of the Bones of John the Baptist*.

1485Henry Tudor murders Richard III; succeeds as Henry VII.

1486Albrecht Dürer apprenticed to Michael Wolgemut in Nuremberg.

1487Hans Memling: *Diptych of Maarten van Nieuwenhove*.

1488Revolt of Ghent; foreign merchants ordered to move to Antwerp.

1489Hans Memling: *Shrine of Saint Ursula*.

c. 1490Geertgen tot Sint Jans: *Night Nativity*.

1492Landfall of Christopher Columbus in America.

1493Election of Maximilian as Holy Roman Emperor.

1494Dürer's first trip to Venice; Memling dies.

1497/8Dürer's *Apocalypse* woodcuts.

1498Charles VIII succeeded by Louis XII of Bourbon.

c. 1503–04Hieronymus Bosch: *Garden of Earthly Delights*.

1504Albrecht Dürer: *Adam and Eve*.

1505Albrecht Dürer's second trip to Venice; Lucas Cranach named court painter to Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony.

1506Maximilian is made regent of the Netherlands; Philip the Fair dies.

1507Margaret of Austria is made regent of the Netherlands; Pope Julius II proclaims indulgences for the rebuilding of St. Peter's in Rome.

1509Henry VIII crowned king of England.

1510Albrecht Altdorfer: *Saint George and the Dragon*

1511Erasmus writes *In Praise of Folly*.

1515Francis I succeeds as king of France; Archduke Charles of Austria appointed governor of the Netherlands; Matthias Grünewald: *Isenheim Altarpiece*; Joachim Patinir in Antwerp guild.

1516Charles V is king of Spain; Erasmus's Greek New Testament published; Hieronymus Bosch dies.

1517Martin Luther protests indulgences in his Ninety-Five Theses.

1518Joachim Patinir: *Penitence of Saint Jerome Triptych*.

1519 Maximilian dies; Charles V elected as Holy Roman Emperor.

1520 Dürer's trip to the Netherlands; Pope Leo X issues papal bull requiring Luther to retract almost half of his Ninety-Five Theses.

1521 Diet of Worms; Luther excommunicated.

c. 1525–30 Lucas van Leyden: *Dance around the Golden Calf*.

1525 German Peasants' Revolt.

1526 Albrecht Dürer: *Four Holy Men*.

c. 1527 Francis I begins the program at Fontainebleau.

1527 Sack of Rome by Charles V.

c. 1528–29 Albrecht Altdorfer: *Battle of Alexander*.

1528 Albrecht Dürer and Matthias Grünewald die.

1531 First English Bible.

c. 1532 Jean Calvin reforms in France.

1532 Maarten van Heemskerck: *Saint Luke Painting the Virgin*.

1533 Hans Holbein: *Ambassadors*.

c. 1534–36 Hans Holbein: *Henry VIII*.

1534 The Act of Supremacy makes Henry VIII the head of the church in England and officially begins the English Reformation.

1535 Publication of the Coverdale Bible, the first full-length English translation of the Bible.

1536 Erasmus dies; Publication of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

1543 Hans Holbein dies.

1545–63 Council of Trent.

1546 Martin Luther dies; Lucas Cranach: *Fountain of Youth*.

1547 Henry VIII dies; succeeded by Edward IV.

1548 Catarina van Hemessen: *Self-Portrait*.

1551 Philip II becomes sole heir of Charles V; Pieter Aertsen: *Meat Stall*.

1551–55 Pieter Bruegel the Elder in Italy.

1553 Maarten van Heemskerck: *Self-Portrait before the Colosseum*; Lucas Cranach dies.

1556 Charles V abdicates to Philip II.

1558 Ferdinand I is crowned Holy Roman Emperor.

1559 Regency of Margaret of Parma, half-sister of Philip II, in the Netherlands; Bruegel: *Netherlandish Proverbs*.

1564 John Calvin dies; Ferdinand I dies; succeeded by Maximilian II as Holy Roman Emperor.

1565 Philip II issues religious edict in the Netherlands opposing William of Orange.

1566 Iconoclasm in the Netherlands.

1567 Duke of Alba in the Netherlands as military governor.

1568 Revolt in the Netherlands.

1569 Pieter Bruegel dies.

1572 Dutch war of independence; William of Orange as stadtholder.

1574 Maarten van Heemskerck dies.

1575 Conference of Breda; Philip II refuses Dutch concessions; Karel van Mander in Rome.

1576 Spanish Fury in Antwerp; pacification of Ghent; unity of Dutch provinces.

1579 Union of Utrecht, foundation of Dutch Republic with seven north provinces; southern Netherlands taken by Philip II.

1585 Siege and recapture of Antwerp by the Duke of Parma for Spain.

Glossary

altarpiece: A work of art with images that is set on or behind the altar in a Christian church.

anamorphic images: Images that are distorted so that they appear correctly only from one viewpoint.

apprentice: A trainee taught the fundamentals of his craft by a guild master.

archaism: The use of an older style at a later point as a revival.

archivolt: Continuous curved molding framing the face of an arch.

art for art's sake: Phrase expressing the 19th-century theory that art is self-sufficient and need not have a moral or social purpose. Often applied retrospectively to earlier eras of art where such an attitude was implicit.

atmospheric perspective: A form of nonlinear perspective imitating the effect of distance by modulating colors and clarity.

baldachin: A structure of wood, stone, or metal consisting of four or more columns supporting an ornamented roof. The purpose of the baldachin was to concentrate attention on an object of veneration.

blockbook: A book composed of pages printed from wooden blocks on which both the image and text have been carved. They flourished briefly in the Netherlands and Germany around the 1460s.

book of hours: Late medieval prayerbook intended for private prayer and meditation by the laity, containing psalms and devotions for the various times of day (the canonical hours). They were luxury items as well as devotional works.

burin: Tool with a sharpened steel point and a wooden handle used to carve lines into a metal plate to create an engraving.

burr: In printmaking, the sharp metal ridge raised by a tool, such as the drypoint needle, as it scratches the plate. When printed, the burr produces a rich, velvety line or area; however, because the metal ridge flakes off during printing, the effect is limited to a small number of early impressions.

Carthusian order: Monastic order founded in the 11th century by Saint Bruno. The Carthusians spent most of their time in solitary prayer in individual cells.

censer: A vessel for burning incense or coals, typically used for liturgical purposes.

charterhouse: A name for any Carthusian monastery.

chiaroscuro: From the Italian words *chiaro* ("light") and *scuro* ("dark"); refers to the use of light and dark tones in art to give the impression of light and shadow. Often suggests a strong contrast of tones.

chiaroscuro woodcut: Early form of color printing that incorporated two or more woodblocks to print on the same sheet. One block was typically used to create the basic outlines of the design (the tone block); other blocks were used to add tones in color.

classicism: The use of a naturalistic yet idealized system of representation, originating in Greek and Roman antiquity, then revived in the Renaissance period, particularly in Italy.

clerestory: Upper part of the nave walls of a church, pierced by a row of windows.

confraternity: Religious association of laypersons from a particular town or region who met for Mass and carried out charitable deeds.

contrapposto: A posture that emphasizes the bilateral opposition of the arms and shoulders to the hips and legs in a figure that is posed naturalistically. Thus, if the left arm and shoulder are raised, the right hip and leg will be lower than those on the left side.

crosshatching: Method used to suggest a sense of three dimensions through an effect of shading created by placing sets of parallel lines at angles to each other.

Danube School: A term that refers to a group of 16th-century German and Austrian artists whose works prominently feature landscape.

deësis: From Byzantine art. In a *deësis*, Christ is shown in the center of a composition, accompanied by the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist.

diptych: Two panels of equal size hinged together so that they can be folded and closed. There are sometimes images on the outside as well as the inside of the panels. Diptychs were often small-scale devotional paintings intended for private rooms or small altars in side chapels; they could also contain portraits.

disguised symbolism: The term was introduced by art historian Erwin Panofsky in 1934 and refers to everyday objects in paintings intended to carry hidden, often religious, meanings. According to Panofsky, it accompanied the development of naturalism and the perspectival representation of space in painting of the late 14th and the early 15th centuries.

drypoint: Type of intaglio print that involves scratching lines into a metal plate. The term also refers to the process or the tool used. Unlike engraving, the tool is not pushed through the surface but used more like a drawing tool. The drypoint needle pulls up bits of metal, called *burr*, to each side of the line. In early impressions pulled from a plate with drypoint, the burr creates a soft, velvety appearance.

engraving: A technique of intaglio printmaking that began in the 15th century in which a tool (called a *burin*) was used to incise an image into a metal plate. The term is also used to refer to the print made by this process. Engraving plates

would be inked, and a sheet of paper placed on top of the plate, then run through a press that forced the paper into the incised lines to pick up the ink.

etching: Type of intaglio print. The plate is first covered with a ground that is impervious to acid; then, a design is made on the surface using an etching needle, removing the ground where lines are to be printed. The plate is exposed to an acid bath that eats into the areas of the plate where the ground had been removed. The plate is then inked and run through a press like an engraving.

genre: Term derived from the French word for “kind” or “variety,” referring to any kind of image that shows scenes from everyday life.

glazing: The application of a translucent or semi-translucent paint layer, which allows the color of the underlying layer to play a role in the final optical effect. In the 15th century, Netherlandish artists began using oil glazes over lighter opaque paints to achieve rich, saturated color and a sense of depth.

gouache: A water-based paint made opaque through adding a powdered white material, such as chalk or marble dust. Gouache produces flat, even color.

grisaille: Monochrome painting carried out in shades of grey.

ground: Preparatory layer placed on a wood or fabric surface before painting. Smooths out the surface and provides an even, light tone for the underpainting.

guild: Association of merchants, craftsmen, or tradesmen from one town. From the 13th to the 16th centuries, guilds played an important role in the production of visual images and maintained regulations about residence requirements, quality control, and training of artists.

Hanseatic League: An alliance of trading guilds that maintained a trade monopoly over the Baltic Sea and much of northern Europe between the 13th and 17th centuries.

heightening: The addition of white or a pale tone on top of a darker tone to enhance the sense of three dimensions of an object or figure in a painting or drawing.

historicize: To emphasize a particular time-bound aspect of an event or location as part of history.

Holy Roman Emperor: The ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, which consisted of many present-day countries in western and central Europe, during its existence from the 8th century until 1806.

Humanism: Term that refers to the impact of the ideas developed through the revival of classical learning and literature in Europe between 1300 and 1600. Humanism involved an emphasis on education and a commitment to civic responsibility and individual moral choice.

icon: Wooden panel with a depiction of a holy figure; the term is primarily used to refer to such images made in the Byzantine empire.

iconoclasm: The destruction of images, particularly religious ones found in an ecclesiastical setting.

iconographic program: Art historical term probably originating in Germany toward the end of the 19th century. It typically describes the combination of individual symbolic motifs that make up a particular theme in a composition.

illuminated manuscript: Handwritten books with painted decoration. The pictures contained within such manuscripts are called *illuminations*.

illumination: A painted illustration in a handmade manuscript.

illusionism, illusionistic: In art, the creation of an appearance of visual reality that is not actually present. Often refers to the creation of an appearance of three-dimensional reality on a flat surface, such as a painting. An illusionistic representation is one characterized above all by the sense of illusionism.

infrared reflectography: A photographic or digital imaging technique that uses a specially designed heat-sensitive film or detector to capture absorption and emission characteristics of reflected infrared radiation. Some materials that are opaque to visible light are transparent to infrared radiation. The technique has been used extensively to reveal underdrawings and lower layers of paint in Renaissance paintings.

in situ: Situated in the original location.

intaglio: Process in which a design is carved into a surface, often made of metal. In printmaking, engraving, etching, and drypoint are intaglio processes.

International Gothic style: A late form of Gothic art, sometimes called the International style, that flourished throughout western and central Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries. It was a refined, sophisticated style of representation used at courts and in urban centers, characterized by elegant figures, naturalistic details, and decorative coloration.

journeyman: From the French *journée*, meaning “day.” A fully trained artist or craftsman who was not qualified as a master in a guild. Journeymen worked in a master’s workshop and could be paid by the day.

loggia: Roofed passageway or room with open arches on one or both sides.

lunette: Semicircular space on a wall or ceiling.

macaronic: An Italian literary term referring to a mixed genre, involving references known to a particular group and often combining words from more than one language. In the visual arts, it was used by one author to describe the style of Hieronymus Bosch, likely to emphasize this painter’s mix of figural and subject types and esoteric references.

mahlstick: Wooden rod about a meter in length, one end of which is covered by a small, round pad. Held so that it rested on the easel or painting surface, it was used to support the painting hand of an artist in order to allow for the secure, steady application of paint.

Mannerism: Style of painting that arose in Italy in the 16th century and spread throughout Europe. The virtuosity of the artist was highlighted in Mannerism through an emphasis on the representation of difficult poses and perspective arrangements. It succeeded the High Renaissance style and was less grounded in naturalism. Mannerist paintings were often elegant but artificial looking.

metalpoint: Drawing instrument made from a small, pointed metal tip of silver, lead, copper, or gold, encased in a wooden holder. To make a metalpoint drawing, a ground must be applied to a support, such as paper or parchment. When pressure is applied, the metal tip leaves behind a line of metal on top of the ground. It is a challenging medium because metalpoint lines cannot be erased.

Modern Devotion: Spiritual movement that arose in Christianity in the 14th century emphasizing individual devotion and a personal relationship with God, unmediated by priests.

Naturalism: A style that emphasizes the reproduction in art of the actual appearance of objects, scenes, and figures.

Neo-Platonism: A philosophical movement from late antiquity, revived in the Renaissance. It emphasized the idea that true reality was not found in the perceptible world but was limited to a nonphysical world of perfect forms accessible only by thought itself.

niello: Type of print made from an engraved gold or silver plate inlaid with a black substance. This type of print functioned as a proof whereby a metalsmith could preserve a certain design or check its progress. *Niello* prints may have helped stimulate the rise of intaglio printmaking in 15th-century Italy.

oil paint: To make oil paint, powdered pigments are suspended in an oil medium, such as linseed or walnut oil. The relative opacity of oil paint is determined by the ratio of pigment to oil. Oil paint allows for the creation of semi-transparent paint layers. It became widespread in the 15th century, first in the Low Countries, later in Italy, France, and Germany.

pattern drawing: A drawn design for a figure, textile pattern, or even a composition, kept in a master's workshop and used multiple times to create a variety of works of art.

pietà: Devotional image of the Virgin Mary with the dead Christ across her lap.

polyptych: A multipaneled work of art, sometimes hinged to fold. Polyptychs were most commonly altarpieces; the term is usually applied to a work with more than three panels (i.e., a triptych).

pouncing: A process used to transfer a design from one support to another. Typically, a drawing will be pricked with holes along the contour lines of a design; then powder or dust applied to the surface of the drawing will fall through the holes to the support below to replicate the original design.

predella: The lowest horizontal band of images, placed below the primary scenes of an altarpiece.

prie-dieu: French term that means "pray God." It is a bench, sometimes with a desktop, used for private prayer.

Protestant Reformation: A 16th-century movement to reform the Catholic Church. The start of the Reformation is commonly considered to be October 1517, when Martin Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. The Reformation ended in division of the Christian Church into Roman Catholic and Protestant denominations.

register (registration): Term used in printing to refer to the correct alignment of a sheet of paper when multiple blocks or plates are used to make a design. It is especially important in color printing.

reliquary shrine: Container for the preservation of relics, such as the physical remains of a saint or a particularly venerated object.

Renaissance: A French word meaning "rebirth." The term is generally used to describe periods that look back to classical antiquity, but when capitalized, typically refers to the period in Europe from about 1400 to 1600, when a transition was made from the medieval era to the modern age.

roundel: A design or image that is round in shape.

sacra conversazione: A religious painting in which the Virgin Mary, the Christ Child, and saints are in the same space and interact. It arose first in Italy, then spread throughout western and central Europe.

sfumato: From Italian *fumo*, or "smoke." The blending of colors at the outline of forms or the transition of color areas to produce a hazy or slightly shadowy, soft effect. Often applied to the work of Leonardo da Vinci and his followers.

silverpoint: A form of metalpoint. In the Renaissance, silver was the preferred medium to use for a metalpoint drawing because of the fine grey lines it created.

single-point perspective: Technique that renders the illusion of recession into space on a flat surface by employing the effect that parallel lines appear to converge toward a single point as they move away from the viewer.

tempera: Type of painting medium, typically containing egg, used to bind pigments. Egg tempera paints dry quickly and are relatively opaque, with a matte surface.

terminus ante quem: Term used to give an approximate date for a text or object. *Terminus ante quem* signifies the latest date at which an object may have been created.

theological virtues: Faith, hope, and charity; the virtues mentioned by Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:13 as the paramount virtues for Christians.

tracery: Originally used to describe the stone framework holding pieces of glass in place within a window opening. Tracery is a particularly characteristic feature of Gothic architecture. Later tracery designs were extended from use in windows to wall or surface decorations.

triptych: A picture (often an altarpiece) with three parts, usually consisting of a central panel flanked by two other panels (called wings or shutters) that may be hinged. The exterior of movable wings may also be painted to allow the altarpiece to be closed or opened, according to the liturgical calendar.

trumeau: A stone pier or support that divided a doorway and helped to support its lintel. Typically found on medieval church doorways.

underdrawing: Preliminary drawing made on a ground layer of a support to provide a design for subsequent paint layers. Underdrawings vary in their state of finish and complexity, ranging from summary sketches to highly detailed images.

vanitas: Derived from a biblical phrase that refers to the vanity or pointlessness of earthly pursuits or possessions; this type of image emphasizes the mortal nature of all life and reminds individuals to think of the inevitability of their own deaths.

woodcut: A type of relief print employing a carved wooden block; the design is raised above other areas of the block, which remain blank when printed.

workshop: Artist's place of work; the term is also used to define the production of a master's assistants or followers.

x-radiography: Technique used in the examination of artworks that exploits the fact that high-energy radiation (with waves shorter than those of visible light) penetrates solid objects that are opaque to visible light. When used to examine paintings, it can reveal changes in different layers of paint, including areas of retouching and overpainting. This allows the true physical condition of a painting to be assessed and sometimes reveals changes made during the original painting process.